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SECRET OF
THE YEW TREE

OR

A CHRISTIAN WOMAN

✓ BY

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

TRANSLATED BY

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INTRODUCTION.

"I HAVE heard it told of a great-grandmother of mine, of noble family (grandeas, in fact), that she was obliged to teach herself to write, copying the letters from a printed book, with a pointed stick for pen and mulberry-juice for ink." The great-granddaughter who said this is the first woman of letters in Spain to-day; indeed, she is perhaps as widely known as any contemporary Spanish writer, man or woman. Though her achievements do not yet entitle her to rank, as a novelist, with Galdós and Pereda, she has conquered a place only second to theirs, and with long years of work before her (she is not yet forty) may even come to rival their great fame. From the Spain that looked with suspicion upon a woman who could more than barely read and write, to the Spain that counts the literary renown of Emilia Pardo Bazán among its modern glories, is a long way; and the chapters recording the struggles and

successive triumphs of Spanish women in their efforts to get within reaching-distance of the tree of knowledge, will be, when they come to be written, among the most striking in the history of the emancipation of woman. Señora Bazan must always be a great figure in the record of that educational development, and happily we are able to trace her own progress pretty fully, taking advantage principally of the charming autobiographical sketch which she prefixed to her novel "Los Pazos de Ulloa."

She was born in 1852, in Coruña, of a family which traced its descent on both sides to the most distinguished among the ancient Galician nobility. One of those children whose earliest memories are of delightful hours passed in some safe retreat in company with a book, she was fortunate in having a father with the good sense, rare in those days, to let her follow her bent. She tells us of the happy days she had when enjoying free swing at a library in the summer villa which the family rented by the sea, and later when allowed to browse at her will among her father's books in Coruña. Plutarch and Homer (in translation, of course,) thrilled her young

fancy, and whole chapters of Cervantes remain to this day photographed upon her memory, fixed there in those early, sensitive days. Her first attempt to write came at the age of eight, and was born of patriotic excitement. It was at the close of the triumphant expedition of O'Donnell to Morocco, and the returned soldiers were fairly apotheosized by their exuberant fellow-countrymen. The Pardo Bazáns had two or three honest country louts among the volunteers to entertain at their house, and to the little Emilia the good clodhoppers embodied the idea of military glory as well as any Hector or Achilles. The worthy fellows were up to their eyes in luck, given the best that the mansion afforded, put to bed between lace-trimmed sheets in the best room; but it all seemed too little to the enthusiastic child, and in a passion of adoring homage she rushed off to her room to write a poem in honor of the heroes! It could not have been long after this that she addressed a sonnet to a deputy of her father's party, and was exalted to the seventh heaven by the great man's extravagant praise of her performance. However, it was not as a poet

that she was to find expression for her genius ; and though she afterward published a volume of verse for which she still professes a sneaking fondness, she admits that she is not much more of a poet than can be met on every street-corner in Spain.

Her education, so far as she did not get it by herself, was principally obtained in a fashionable French boarding-school in Madrid, where "Télémaque" was served up three times a day, and where Emilia was given the idea that she had exhausted the possibilities of astronomical science when she had looked at an eclipse through a bit of smoked glass. Later she was turned over to the tender mercies of tutors. Instead of lessons on the piano, she begged her father to allow her to study Latin ; but this was quite too wild a thing to ask, even of him, and his refusal only gave her a lasting hatred for the piano. By the time she was fourteen, she was allowed to read pretty much everything, though still forbidden to look into the works of Hugo, Dumas, and the French Romanticists generally. Instead of these, an uncle put into her hands the novels of Fernan

Caballero—a most suggestive incident, the woman who worked out the beginnings of the modern Spanish novel, read by the girl who was to help carry it to its highest development! However, her unformed taste thought nothing worthy to be called a novel unless a man was fired out of a cannon or flung over a cliff in every chapter, and her furtive reading of Hugo—of course, she tasted the forbidden waters—confirmed her in a liking which she was long in outgrowing.

In 1868, just after she had first put on long dresses, she was married. To make short work with her domestic life, let it be added, that her husband's name is Don José Quiroga, and that three children have been born to them. During the troublous times that came in with the Revolution of 1868, and throughout the reign of Amadeus, her family was in political eclipse, and with her father she traveled extensively in France and southern Europe, learning English and Italian, and from her industrious practice of keeping a diary acquiring the writing habit. On her return to Spain, she found the German philosophical influence in the as-

cendant, and to put herself abreast of the intellectual movement of the time, read deeply in philosophy and history. By this time she had come fully to perceive the defective nature of her education, and set herself rigorously to correct it, for some years devoting herself to the severest studies. At a literary contest in Orense, in 1876, she carried off the first prize both in prose and verse, though for three years after that she wrote nothing except occasional articles for a Madrid periodical. Finally, as a relaxation from her strenuous historical studies, she began reading novels again, beginning with contemporary English, French, and Italian writers; for in her provincial home, and in her absorption in philosophical and historical reading, she had never heard of the splendid development of the novel in her own country. At last a friend put her on the track, and then she read with deepening delight.

To her it was the chance magic touch that finally gave her genius its full vent. If a novel was thus a description of real life, and not a congeries of wild adventures, why could she not write one herself? That was the ques-

tion she put to herself, and the answer came in the shape of her first novel, "Pascual López," published in the *Revista de España*, and afterward separately. She began her biography of Francis de Assisi in 1880, but a temporary failure of health sent her off to Vichy. Of this journey was born her "Un Viaje de Novios." Fully conscious now of the place and method of the realistic novel, and of the high value of its development in Spain, her course was clear. Since then her novels have appeared with surprising rapidity. She has all along kept her feet on the earth, writing of what she knows, and thus it happens that most of her scenes are laid in Galicia. As a preparation for writing "La Tribuna," a study of working women, she went to a tobacco factory for two months, morning and afternoon, to listen to the conversation and observe the manners of the women employed there. Her work has been steadily broadening, and this volume with its sequel, is the largest canvas she has filled.

Though now definitely and mainly a novelist, her literary activity has been highly

varied. Her letters on criticism, published in *La Epoca* in 1882, evoked the widest discussion, and her lectures on "The Revolutionary Movement and the Novel in Russia," delivered before the most brilliant literary circle of Madrid, have already been given an English dress. Articles from her pen are a frequent attraction in the leading magazines, and her vivacious series of letters about the Paris Exposition won much attention. As might be inferred from her unflagging productiveness, she is possessed of as much physical as mental vigor. She is of winning appearance and unaffected manners. Since the death of her father, in 1888, she has been entitled as his sole heir to be called a countess; but she does not use the title. "Who would know me as a countess?" she asks. "I shall be simply Pardo Bazan as long as I live."

ROLLO OGDEN.

SECRET OF THE YEW TREE.

CHAPTER I.

YOU will see by the following list the course of studies that the State obliged me to master in order to enter the School of Engineering: arithmetic and algebra as a matter of course; geometry equally so; besides, trigonometry and analytics, and, finally, descriptive geometry and the differential calculus. In addition to these mathematical studies, French, only held together with pins, if the truth must be told, and English very hurriedly basted; and as for that dreadful German, I would not put tooth to it even in jest—the Gothic letters inspired me with such great respect. Then there was the everlasting drawing—linear, topographic, and landscape even, the latter being intended, I presume, to enable an

engineer, while managing his theodolite and sights, to divert himself innocently by scratching down some picturesque scene in his album—after the manner of English misses on their travels.

After entrance came the “little course,” so called, in order that we might not be afraid of it. It embraced only four studies—to wit, integral calculus, theoretical mechanics, physics, and chemistry. During the year of the “little course,” we had no more drawing to do; but in the following, which is the first year of the course properly speaking, we were obliged, besides going deep into materials of construction, applied mechanics, geology, and cubic mensuration, to take up new kinds of drawing—pen-drawing, shading and washing.

I was not one of the most hard-working students, nor yet one of the most stupid—I say it as shouldn’t. I could grind away when it was necessary, and could exercise both patience and perseverance in those branches where, the power of intellect not being sufficient, one must have recourse to

a parrot-like memory. I failed to pass several times, but it is impossible to avoid such mishaps in taking a professional course in which they deliberately tighten the screws on the students, in order that only a limited number may graduate to fill the vacant posts. I was sure of success, sooner or later; and my mother, who paid for the cost of my tuition, with the assistance of her only brother, was as patient as her disposition would allow her to be with my failures. I assured her that they were not numerous and that, when I finally emerged a full-fledged civil engineer, I should have in my pocket the four hundred and fifty dollar salary, besides extras.

Nor were all my failures avoidable, even if I had been as assiduous as possible in my studies. I was all run down and sick for one year, finally having an attack of varioloid; and this reason, with others not necessary to enumerate, will explain why at the age of twenty-one I found myself still in the second year of the course, although I enjoyed the reputation of being a studious youth and

quite well informed—that is to say, I yet lacked three years.

The year before, the first year of the course strictly speaking, I was obliged to let some studies go over to the September examinations. I attribute that disagreeable occurrence to the bad influence I was under, in a certain boarding-house, where the evil one tempted me to take up my abode. The time I passed there left undying recollections in my memory, which bring a smile to my lips and indiscreet joy to my soul whenever I evoke them. I will give some idea of the place, so that the reader may judge whether Archimedes himself would have been capable of studying hard in such a den.

There are several houses in Madrid at the present date—for example, the Corralillos, the Cuartelillos, the Tócame Roque—all very similar to the one I am about to describe. Within that abode dwelt the population of a small-sized village; it had three courts with balconies, on which opened the doors of the small rooms,—or pigeon-holes one might call them,—with their respective numbers on the

lintels. There was no lack of immodest and quarrelsome inmates; there were street musicians singing couplets to the accompaniment of a tuneless guitar; cats in a state of high nervous excitement scampering from garret to garret, or jumping from balustrade to balustrade—now impelled by amorous feelings, now by a brick thrown at them full force. Clothes and dish-cloths were hung out to dry; ragged petticoats and patched underwear, all mixed up pell-mell. There were pots of sweet basil and pinks in the windows; and in fact, everything would be found there that abounds in such dens in Madrid—so often described by novelists and shown forth by painters in their sketches from real life.

The third suite on the right had been hired by Josefa Urrutia, a Biscayan, the ex-maid of the marchioness of Torres-Nobles. At first her business was pretty poor, and she sank deeper and deeper in debt. At last she got plenty of boarders, and when I took up my abode in the “dining-room bed-room,” the place was in its glory; she had not a single vacant apartment. All the boarders paid

their dues honestly, if they had the money, with certain exceptions, and the reason of these I will reveal under the seal of profound secrecy.

A certain Don Julián occupied the parlor, which was the best room on the floor. He was a Valencian, jolly and gay; a great spend-thrift, fond of jokes and fun, and an inveterate gambler. They said that he had come to Madrid in quest of an office, which he never succeeded in getting; nevertheless the candidate lived like a prince, and instead of helping with his board to keep up Pepa's business, it was whispered about that he lived there gratis, and even took from time to time small sums from her, destined to go off in the dangerous coat-tails of the knave of hearts.

However, these little private weaknesses of Pepa Urrutia's would never have come to light, if it had not been for the green-eyed monster. The Biscayan was furiously jealous of a handsome neighbor, who was fond of flirting with all the boarders opposite, as I have indubitable evidence. In a fit of desperation Pepa would sometimes shriek at the top of her lungs, and

would call out "swindler; rogue!" adding, "If you had any decency, you would pay me at once what you have wheedled out of me, and what you owe me."

On such occasions Don Julián would stick his hands in his pockets, firmly shut his jaws, and, silent as the grave, pace up and down the parlor. His silence would exasperate Pepa still more, and sometimes she would go off into hysterics; and after showering injurious epithets on the Valencian, she would rush out, slamming the door so as to shake the whole building.

Then a stout, florid, bald-headed man, about fifty years old, with a nice pleasant face, would appear in the passage-way, and with a strongly marked Portuguese accent, inquire of the irate landlady :

"Pepiña, what ails you?"

"Nothing at all," she would reply, making a stampede into the kitchen, and muttering dreadful oaths in her Basque dialect. We would hear her knocking the kettles and frying pans about, and after a little while the cheerful sputtering of oil would announce to

us that anyhow potatoes and eggs were frying, and that breakfast would soon be ready.

The stout, bald-headed gentleman, who had the back parlor, was a Portuguese physician who had come to Madrid to bring a lawsuit against the Administration for some claim or other he had against it. He was an ardent admirer of Spanish popular music, like most Portuguese, and he would pass the whole blessed day in a chair, near the balcony,—dressed as lightly as possible in jacket and linen pantaloons (it was in the month of June, I must observe), a Scotch cap, with floating streamers concealing his bald pate,—and strumming on a guitar, to the harsh and discordant accompaniment of which he would sing the following words :

Love me, girl of Seville, beauteous maid, spotless
flower,
For with the sound of my guitar my heart beats
for thee.

Here he would break off his song to look toward the window of a young washerwoman, ugly enough in appearance, but lively and sociable. She would stand at the window laughing and making eyes at him. The Portu-

guese would sigh, and exclaim in broken Spanish: "*Moy bunita!*" and then, attacking his guitar with renewed zest, would finish his song:

Oh, what grief, if she is false—no, fatal doubt flee
far from me.

Ah, what joy is love when one finds a heavenly
soul!

When he was done, he would draw a straw cigar-case from his breast pocket, with a package of cigarettes and some matches. Hardly would he have finished lighting the first one, when a young man, twenty-four years old,—one of Pepa's boarders also, whom I looked upon for a long time as the personification of an artist,—would burst into the room. His surname was Botello, but I never thought to inquire his Christian name. He was fine looking, of good height, wore his hair rumpled, not too long, but thick and curly, and he looked something like a mulatto—like Alexandre Dumas, with his great thick lips, mustache like Van Dyke's, bright black eyes, and a fine, dark complexion. We used to tease him, calling him Little Dumas every hour of the day.

Why had Pepa Urrutia's boarders made up their minds that Botello was an artist? Even now, when I think of it, I cannot understand why. Botello had never drawn a line, nor murdered a sonata, nor scrawled an article, nor written a poor drama, not even a simple farce in one act; yet we all had the firm conviction that Botello was a finished artist.

I think that this conviction sprang from his careless and slovenly attire more than from his way of living, or his striking and genial countenance. In all sorts of weather, he would wear a close-fitting blue cloth overcoat, which he declared belonged to the Order of the Golden Fleece, because the collar and cuffs displayed a broad band of grease, and the front a lamb, figured in stains. This precious article of apparel was such an inseparable companion that he wore it in the street, washed and shaved in it, and even threw it over his bed, as a covering, while he slept. His trousers were frayed around the bottom, his boots were worn down at the heels, and the cracked leather allowed his stockings to

be seen, smeared with ink so that their incautious whiteness might not appear. With all that, Botello's handsome head and graceful form did not lose all their attractiveness even in such a guise ; on the contrary, his very rags, when seen upon his elegant figure, acquired a certain mysterious grace.

Another distinctive phase of Botello's character, which made him resemble a Bohemian of the artistic type, was his happy-go-lucky disposition, as well as his contempt for labor, and utter ignorance of the realities of life. Botello was the son of a judge, and the nephew of a nobleman's steward. When Botello's father died, he was left under his uncle's charge, who lodged and fed him, and gave him an allowance of two hundred and fifty dollars, only demanding that Botello should be in bed by twelve o'clock. He did not oblige him to study, nor take any pains to give him an education ; but when he discovered that his nephew passed every evening at the Bohemian *café* or at some low resort, and came home at all hours of the night, letting himself in with a latch-key so as not to be heard, he made the welkin ring.

Instead of trying to reform him, he ignominiously drove him out of his house.

Without any occupation, with only twenty-one dollars a month to keep him, Botello wandered from boarding-house to boarding-house, each one worse than the last, until in a gaming-saloon he made the acquaintance of Don Julián, the lord and master of Pepa's heart. Thus he came to our dwelling, drawn by this new bond of friendship. From that hour, Botello found an exemplary guardian in the Valencian. Don Julián took it upon himself to draw the young man's monthly allowance, and then off he would rush to the tavern or gaming-house to try his luck. If he got a windfall of one or two hundred dollars, he could give Botello his twenty-one, and even, occasionally, add a few more; but if fate were unpropitious, Botello might take leave of his money forever. As he sorely needed funds, the ward would then engage in a lively tussle with his guardian.

"Well, now, *señor mio*, how shall I get along this month?" he would ask. Just then a providential apparition would present itself in

Pepa, who would come to the rescue of her dear extortioner, while she screamed loudly, threatening Botello :

“Be quiet, be quiet ! I will wait.”

“What of that ?” the unfortunate youth would reply ; “he has not left me even a dime to buy tobacco.”

Pepa would then put her hand in her pocket, and, drawing out a grimy quarter, would exclaim :

“There now, buy yourself a package of cigarettes.”

But when Pepa's quarters were scarce, or even when they were not, Botello would have recourse to the Portuguese. He would be in the latter's room as soon as he heard him strike a match to light a cigarette, and half jokingly, half in earnest, would tease for some, until the best part of the package would find its way into the Bohemian's pocket. As the Portuguese was accustomed to the ways and disposition of little Dumas,—who was a genuine artist, as he solemnly assured everybody he met,—he never took his jokes seriously, nor did he get offended on account of the maraud-

ing inroads into his pockets. On the contrary, one would say that the musical physician's heart was wonderfully drawn to Botello by his very pranks, even though he often carried his practical jokes too far. I will mention one as an instance.

As the Portuguese was obliged to make calls and to present his letters of recommendation, in order to hasten the execution of his business, he ordered a hundred very glossy visiting-cards with his name, "Miguel de los Santos Pinto," engraved in beautiful script. Botello happened to see them, and showed them to everybody in the house; expressing his amazement that a Portuguese should have so few surnames. He wanted to add at least, "Teixeira de Vasconcellos Palmeirim Junior de Santarem do Morgado das Ameixeiras," so that it should be more in character. We got that out of his head, but his next idea was even worse. He surreptitiously laid hold of the pen and India ink, which I used for my drawings and my plans, and wrote carefully under "Miguel de los Santos Pinto" this appendage, "Corno de Boy" (Ox-horn). In order not to take the

trouble of adding it to all the cards, he did so to twenty-five only, and hid the rest.

The next day the Portuguese went out to make some calls, and left ten or twelve of the cards at different places. The following Sunday he met an acquaintance in Arenal Street, who, half-choked with laughter, stopped him, saying, "Why, Don Miguel, is your name really Corno de Boy? Is there any such name in your country?"

"What do you mean?" said the embarrassed Portuguese. "Of course not; my name is simply Santos Pinto; nothing more."

"Well, just look at this card."

"Let me see, let me see!" murmured the poor man. "It really does say so!" he exclaimed in amazement, on reading the addition.

"The engraver must have made a mistake," added his friend, jocosely.

But Don Miguel did not swallow that, and as soon as he reached the house showed the card to Botello, and demanded an explanation of the sorry jest. The big scamp so warmly protested that he was innocent, that

he succeeded in diverting Don Miguel's suspicions toward me.

"Don't you see," he said, "Salustio has the very pen and ink with which that was written, in his room now? Don't trust those quiet people. Oh, these proper fellows!"

In consequence of this Macchiavellian scheme, the good-natured Portuguese singled me out for his jealous suspicion, although I had never meddled with him in my life. But I firmly believe that his blindness was voluntary, because he could not have had the slightest doubt in regard to some other malicious pranks that Botello perpetrated.

One day when he was playing dominoes with his victim, Botello managed to put a paper crown, with donkey's ears, on the latter's head, so that the nymph of the ironing-table might be convulsed with laughter, for she was watching the whole performance. Then, one day, he pinned long strips of paper upon his coat-tails, so that when he went out in the street all the street Arabs hooted at him. Nevertheless, the fondness of the Portuguese for Botello never failed. When Botello

lacked money to pay for a ball ticket, he would go to Don Miguel and ask for half a dollar, and exhaust all his eloquence in trying to persuade him that he ought to go on a frolic also. When the Portuguese would refuse, making the excuse that he did not want to displease the washerwoman, Botello would retort, calling him a booby. As the Portuguese did not understand that word, and appeared somewhat offended, Botello would make a movement as if to return the half-dollar. "Take it, take it, if you are angry with me," the sly youth would exclaim. "My personal dignity will not allow me to accept favors from any one who looks at me in that way. You are angry, aren't you now?"

"I can never be angry with you," the Portuguese would reply, putting the money into his hand by main force; then turning toward the rest of us who were witnessing this scene, he would say with the most kindly smile I have ever seen on any human countenance: "This rapacious rogue! But he is a great artist."

Then he would go back to his place at the window, and strum on his guitar.

The reader must acknowledge that there was no opportunity for applying one's mind to methodical, engrossing, and difficult study in a house where such scenes occurred every moment of the day. The bursts of laughter, alternating with frequent squabbles; the racing up and down the halls; the continual going in and out of lazy fellows who, not knowing how to kill time, endeavor to make the studious ones lose it; the irregularity of our meals; the confidential way we had of living in each other's rooms; the being up all night, and getting out of bed at midday, did not greatly help a student to win distinction in the School of Engineering. On the other hand, the contagion of joking and mirth could not possibly be withstood at my age.

Other students boarded there; some attending the University, others the School of Mountain Engineering, and others the School of Architecture; but none of them was a prodigy of learning. Perhaps I was ahead of them all in diligent application to my studies; but as my subjects were very difficult,

it turned out that I found myself put over to the September examinations that year. Consequently I was obliged to spend my vacation in Madrid, and was unable to enjoy the cool breezes of my home in the province.

That summer would have been wearisome indeed, and unbearable, if I had not been surrounded by such jolly and frolicsome people, and if the good-natured Portuguese had not afforded us such fun by submitting to the endless pranks of Botello.

When there was no other way of killing an afternoon, little Dumas would snap his fingers and say, throwing back his perspiring head so as to brush away the thick black mane, which was suffocating him :

“Let us play a trick on Corno de Boy. Who will help me catch some bugs?”

“Catch bugs?”

“Yes, just make a cornucopia and fill it with bugs to the top. The small ones will not do ; they must be big ones.”

Then every one would go to his room to engage in the strange hunt. Unfortunately, it

was not difficult. As soon as we searched under our beds, or our pillows, we would quickly collect a dozen or more fearful fellows. We would carry our tributes to the inventor of the practical joke, and he would put them all together. As soon as we knew that the Portuguese was in bed, we would take off our shoes, and, repressing our desire to laugh, would station ourselves at his door. As soon as Don Miguel began to snore, Botello would softly raise the latch, and, as the headboard was next the door, all that the imp of an artist had to do was to open the cornucopia and scatter the contents over the head and face of the sleeping man. After this was accomplished, Botello would close the door very quietly, while we, convulsed with laughter, and pinching one another in sheer excitement, would wait for the pitched battle to begin. Hardly two minutes would elapse before we would hear the Portuguese turn over in bed. Then we would hear broken and unintelligible phrases; then strong ejaculations; then the scratching of a match, and his astonished exclamation, "By Jove!"

We would come forward with great hypocrisy, inquiring whether he was sick or whether anything had happened. "By Jove!" the good man would exclaim; "pests here, and pests everywhere. By Jove! Ugh!"

The next day we would advise him to change his room; and he would do so, hoping to find some relief; but we would repeat the same performance.

So we managed to kill time during the dog-days, with these stupid practical jokes. What most surprised me was that the Portuguese, who was always the butt of them, never thought of changing his boarding-house nor even gave his persecutor a drubbing.

When I passed in my deficient subjects in September, I was obliged to exert all my energy and resolution in order to do what I thought the Portuguese should have done—that is, to change my boarding-house. The attraction of a gay and idle life, my pleasant intercourse with Botello, for whom it was impossible not to feel a compassionate regard, similar to tenderness; the very defects and inconveniences of that abode, made me much

fonder of it than was expedient. But reason finally triumphed. "Life is a treasure too precious to be squandered in boyish pranks and stupid practical jokes," I reflected, as I was packing up my effects preparatory to taking myself off somewhere else. "If that unfortunate Botello is an idle dreamer, and has made up his mind to fetch up in a public hospital, I, for my part, am determined to acquire a profession, take life seriously, and be my own lord and master. The people in this house are poor deluded mortals, destined to end in nameless wretchedness. I must go where one can work."

Notwithstanding all this, my heart felt heavy when I took leave of them all. Pepa's tears flowed freely at losing a good boarder who, she declared, always paid punctually and never gave her the slightest trouble. My eyes were not filled with tears, but I felt as much regret as though I were parting with some of my dearest friends, while I embraced Botello, and cordially pressed the hand of the good Portuguese. As I walked behind the porter who carried my trunk, I explained my

emotion to myself in the following words: "This picturesque irregularity, this predominance of feeling and jolly good humor and contempt for serious life, which I observe in Pepa Urrutia's house and among her boarders, have a certain charm, inasmuch as they make up a kind of romanticism innate in our countrymen,—a romanticism which I also suffer from. That dwelling seems like a community founded not on a basis of socialism but on a total lack of common sense and brains. I have met several persons there who are so very good that they are totally devoid of discretion or common sense. I suppose that I shall miss them greatly at first, for that very reason, and shall feel homesick; and as years roll on my imagination will invest everything connected with them with a poetic glamor, even to the episode of the bugs. Nevertheless, I am worth more than what I am leaving behind me, because I am capable of tearing myself away from that place." My pride consoled me, by whispering to me, that I was better bred and more energetic than Pepa's boarders.

CHAPTER II.

MY homesickness did not last as long as I feared. Everybody prefers his natural element, and I did not find mine in the confusion and rollicking ways of the Bohemian boarding-house.

My new abode was in Clavel Street. It was in a suite on the fourth floor, with plenty of sunshine; the rooms there were not so small as those which are usually furnished for six shillings a day. Our landlady was also a native of Biscay, for half of the boarding-house keepers in Spain come from that province. But she was very unlike Pepa Urrutia. She was as neat as wax, and could make most delicious stews of codfish and tomatoes, as well as stewed tripe and vegetable soup, and other savory messes of our national cuisine, and she had no wastefulness apparently; consequently all the boarders had either to settle

their bills in due time, or to leave the house. In Doña Jesusa's abode—we called her Doña because she was middle-aged—the beds were scrupulously clean, though hard and narrow. She kept the maid scrubbing and cleaning all the time. A caged linnet sang merrily in the passageway in front of the kitchen. On Christmas Eve she regaled us with almond pottage and sea-bream, and there was some kind of humble comfort and domestic peace to be enjoyed there. It is true that everything was scrimped and scanty; and, as our rations were so meager, the five or six students of us who usually dined there, ordinarily left the table unsatisfied. I don't wish to complain of the chocolate, which was pasty stuff of the color of a brick, nor of the leathery corn-cakes, nor of our dessert of apples and pears, which seemed like wax counterfeits to judge by the way we refrained from touching them.

“At least they ought to give us the dessert of raisins and almonds, which they give to criminals condemned to death,” said Luis Portal, a fellow from my province, who was of a humorous vein.

I will not say much about the maccaroni soup, which Luis classified as "alphabetical" or "astronomical," according as the paste was cut in the shape of letters or of stars; I will not dwell on the wretched pieces of boiled meat, with a bit of bacon hidden behind a pea, and already served out in portions, so that no boarder should take more than his share; nor will I betray the flabbiness of the beef, nor the maggots we used to find in the fish. At my age it is seldom that one bothers himself much about the pleasures of the palate. Besides, on any boarder's birthday, or on any great holiday, Doña Jesusa would regale us with some rural dish, upon which she had lavished all her skill, and we would then take our revenge. Doña Jesusa always celebrated the principal holidays, and observed them by having an extra dish on the table; so these extraordinary occasions helped us to put up with her usual parsimony—after the manner of the pleasing alternations between want and plenty in our homes.

Luis Portal was the son of a coffee-merchant in Orense, and as he was very ingenious as

well as fond of good living, he conceived the idea that we might enjoy a cup of coffee, mornings and afternoons, without great cost. So he purchased a second-hand coffee-pot in the *Rastro*, which held enough for six cups; he also bought a second-hand coffee-mill, got some of the best coffee, and two pounds of brown sugar; and, when the cost was divided between us, we found that we had the most delicious coffee at a very low price. If we could only afford half a wineglass of champagne or of brandy! But we were brought to a stand-still there. Our means would not reach thus far, for brandy was ruinously expensive. Portal had a bottle in his trunk which he had brought from home, so we made up our minds to make the most of that by taking only one swallow at a time; and we kept to our resolution so well that in two days we drank it all up.

In fact, one could study in Doña Jesusa's house. It was quiet and orderly, and there were regular hours for everything. Sometimes the landlady would fall to scolding the maid; but this familiar and expected noise

did not disturb us at all. So we all ground away to the best of our powers, trying not to have to say "not prepared" when the professors questioned us. The professor, who taught the principles of machinery, used to frighten us a little by his habit of *going a-fishing*, that is, asking questions out of the regular order.

I have already said that I was not one of the most diligent in my studies, nor was Luis Portal, either. We both used to fall back on general knowledge, letting our wits float easily unburdened by a great load in the memory, because we feared the particular exhaustion which those arid and hard studies cause in weak brains, and which Luis called "The mathematical topsyturviness."

On the other hand, two lads who lived with us were so completely worn out that we were afraid that by the time they finished their course—if they ever did finish it—they would be ready for a lunatic asylum. One of them, a Cuban, was gifted with a prodigious memory. With the aid

of this inferior but indispensable faculty, which can so deftly cover the weakness of the intellect, he would fairly devour text-books, and as long as it was not necessary to enlarge upon a subject, nor to add a single word to the text, nor take one away, he would come off with flying colors. But the slightest objection, or the gentlest interruption, anything, in fact, which called for the exercise of mind, would crush him; he would get completely addled, and could not give a straight answer to the simplest question.

Portal used to call him the little parrot, and make sport of his serenity and his languid air; and laughed to see him always shivering, even when close to the fire. When he put away his books, the West Indian was like a bird released from his cage. At such times, in place of the mental vigor to handle the heavy iron weights of science skillfully, the poor exile would display the riches of a brilliant imagination, all light and colors; or to be more exact, all spangles and phosphorescent gleams. The commonest phrase,

on issuing from his lips, took on a poetic form; he could make rhymes as unconsciously as a mocking-bird sings, and could talk in rhythmical and harmonious verse an hour at a time.

But the sarcastic Portal used to say that the Cuban's poetry had precisely the same artistic value as the tunes we compose and hum while we are lathering our faces preparatory to shaving, and had as much meaning read from the bottom up as from the top down.

"We'll call him the mocking-bird instead of parrot," he would say every time that the Cuban would display for us his poetical string of glass-beads which usually occurred after he had filled himself with coffee.

The other assiduous student came from Zamora; he had a narrow forehead and an obtuse mind. He had neither father nor mother, and the cost of his education was met by his octogenarian and paralyzed grandmother, who used to say: "I don't want to die until you are a man, and have finished your studies, and can see your future secure."

It was but a slight thread which bound the poor old woman to this world, and the lad knew it ; so he displayed a silent and savage determination. As the Cuban studied with his memory, the Zamoran studied with his will, always kept tense. His poor mental endowments obliged him to work doubly. He neither took nights off on Saturdays nor had holidays on Sundays, nor any excursions whatever. No correspondence with a sweetheart for him ; no—nothing but his books, his everlasting books, from morning till night ; an equation here and a problem there, without relaxing his assiduity for a single moment, without being absent for a single day, and never saying “not prepared.”

“Have you ever seen such a fellow? He is always on the stretch,” my friend Luis Portal would say ; “why, he’ll be a civil engineer before we are, if he does not burst his skin. How thin he is, and his hands are very feverish at times. His breath is very bad ; his digestion must surely be out of order. No wonder it is, for he does not take any exercise nor any recreation whatever. Salustio, it is

all right to get ahead, but one must look out for his health ! ”

I got along well with Luis Portal, and we became fast friends, although our ideas and aspirations were so entirely different. Portal used to like to show himself a sagacious, practical person, or, at least, gave indications that he would be when he arrived at the age when a person's moral nature becomes well-defined and unified.

We did not differ totally in our views ; we had some opinions in common. Portal, like me, was a champion of self-help, and despised restraint or tutelage. He thought that a man should be self-sufficient, and should take advantage of his earlier years, in order to secure freedom or comfort for his manhood.

“ We don't appear like Galicians,” he sometimes used to say, “ for we are so energetic in everything.”

I did not agree with him on this point, and bade him remember the adventurous and enterprising spirit the Galicians had displayed within a short time past.

“ There's no doubt about it,” he would say,

obstinately, "we are more like Catalans than Galicians, my dear fellow."

If we were much alike in our ideas of the way to order our lives, we differed greatly in our estimate of the principal aim of life.

Portal used to say :

"Look here, sonny, I am not going to waste my time catching flies nor in trifling pursuits. I'll try to get money so as to set the world at defiance. It is but a sorry joke to pass one's life grubbing and in want. My father is an awful miser ; he will not shell out a cent, and as yet I know nothing at all about many fine things there are going. I don't know whether by following my profession I shall ever succeed in obtaining them ; I believe that politicians and tradespeople know how to make money better than professional men. It is true the two things are not incompatible, and that Sagasta himself is a civil engineer. Anyway, just let them give me free swing and I shall know how to fix things. If I don't get rich, put me down for a fool."

While I applauded his valiant resolution, yet I knew that my dreams of the future

differed from his. By "fine things" Portal meant to live well, to drink good wines, to smoke good cigars, and perhaps marry some beautiful, rich girl ; while I, without despising all these good things of the earth, did not long for any one of them in particular. I only desired my freedom. I foresaw that with that I might obtain something very noble, and worthy of being tasted and enjoyed ; but not in a material or prosaic sense ; something like renown, celebrity, passion, adventures, wealth, authority, home, children, travels, combats, even misfortune. At any rate, it would be life—life rich, and worthy of a rational being—who is not content simply to vegetate nor to gloat over pleasures, but who must run over the whole scale of thought, of feeling, and of action. I could not clearly define in what my hopes consisted, but I thought that it would be degrading to lower them to Portal's material and sensuous level.

Nor did I consider myself a visionary, or an enthusiast, or a dreamer. On the contrary, I knew that if sometimes my head did lift itself toward the clouds, my feet still remained

firmly planted on the earth; and that all my actions were those of a man fully determined to make his way in the world, without being distracted by the siren of enthusiasm.

If our creed for the individual had certain points in common, in our creed for the nation, Portal and I utterly disagreed. We were both Republicans; but he belonged to Castelar's party, was a cautious opportunist, and almost a monarchist by force of concessions; while I was a radical, one of Pi's followers, and firmly believed that we ought not to carry out a conciliatory policy in Spain, nor accommodate ourselves to old traditions in any respect whatever; but that, on the contrary, we ought to press on resolutely and uncompromisingly in the path of thorough and progressive change.

"These concessions are ruinous and fatal to our country," I would say, "and by concessions in this case I mean something equivalent to cheating. They say 'concessions' so as not to say capitulation or defeat. If our forefathers, those upright men of 1812 to 1840, had accepted a compromise and walked softly about absorbed in thought, a pretty fix we should be

in now ! It hurts to cut out a cancer, and causes disturbance in the system ; but the cancer is destroyed. I can't understand this mania for compromising with the past, with absolute and fanatic Spain. Your illustrious Chief — for thus we styled Castelar—is a man of the world, fond of making himself agreeable to duchesses and to crowned heads ; and that's what he calls holding to old traditions. Empty words ! Fortunately, the French in 1793 did not adopt that method, nor did we in later times. Don't talk to me. At the rate we are going, within a few years Spain will be crowded with convents again. It is absurd to tolerate such craftiness, and even protect it, as our most liberal government does now. The Jesuits have again spread their net, and every once in a while draw it in a little more. Some day they will catch the whole of us. Of course, when such big bugs as they gain their ends, they don't care what comes after. 'After me the deluge,' as that old scamp, Louis XV., used to say. No well-balanced mind can think that in order to weaken and uproot an institution like Monarchy, you must begin by strengthening

and coddling it, and quietly implanting it in the hearts of the people. I don't swallow that 'concession' hook; don't let them try that business on me."

Portal would then get excited and answer me with equal energy: "Well, you are simple, to say the least. Those who think as you do are in a fool's paradise. With your system, we would have an outbreak of the Carlists in the twinkling of an eye, and Spain would be plunged in petty civil war. I don't like to think, either, what would happen on the establishment of your famous federation. Within two months after the establishment of the Galician canton, there wouldn't be a rag left. All would want to command, and none to obey. If you begin by wounding and outraging the susceptibilities of a nation, it will surely result in demoralization like that which followed the Revolution of September. Rest assured, Castelar has a long head. It is the republic that is not yet of age, not the king. Let the republic fall of its own weight, like a ripe pear."

"Try some other dog with that bone. What

they all want here is to be chief. Sonny, there are no ideals; all that has collapsed and we must bring them to life, believe me."

"Don't spin me great yarns about your ideals," Portal would reply, getting angry. "Ideals are the cause of all our troubles. There is no other ideal but peace, and to bring order into all this chaos, little by little."

Another subject of dispute was local government. I was not at all modest in my demands. I wanted the independence of Galicia. In regard to our annexation to Portugal, we might discuss that later. We would see what was most expedient. But it would be well for Portugal, also, to shake off her ancient and fantastic monarchical yoke, and assent to the Iberian Federation.

"I don't know what I'd give just to see your swinish ideal realized for about twenty-four hours," Luis would exclaim. "If Galicia should declare itself a canton, not even the evil one would stay there. Make up your mind to one thing: in Spain, the smaller the governing entities—is that the right word?—the worse they are. The central government, as you call it,

makes a thousand blunders ; but the provincial legislature would make two thousand, the county justices three thousand, and the village authorities a million. Fortunately, to talk about Galician independence is as idle as to ask the fish and the sands what they know about the sea."

"So you think that the provinces have no right to say, like individuals, 'each one for himself.' "

"Look here, don't say anything about their rights. To talk about their rights, is running off on a tangent. By rights and technicalities, I can prove to you that Isabella the Second is to-day the rightful Queen of Spain, and that her grandson is only a usurper. In rational politics no rights nor mummeries exist. There is only what is advantageous or otherwise, what is successful or unsuccessful. There is a sense of smell and of touch, and although I can't explain to you in what it consists, yet it shows itself in the result. Radical ideas lead on to logical absurdities. You can't apply algebra to politics. And say no more about independence. Our Spanish nation is an in-

disputable reality, even if you do not believe it."

Irritated by his opposition, I would exclaim: "What a musty idea that love of country is! The great thinkers laugh at the idea of patriotism; you can't deny that."

"Tell your great thinkers to go think in a stable. If they suppress the springs of action, little by little, because humanity has always progressed, we'll no longer have any pretext for so much as living. You know that I am not at all sentimental, but our country is like our family, and there's no need of poetry or sentimentalism to make us love it and defend it with our lives. You think you settle everything by dragging out that about old-fashioned notions. Well, old-fashioned notions are inevitable and necessary and proper. We live on them. And that old idea about our love of country is not the only one bred in our bones. There are a great many others, my dear fellow, which we'll not give up for twenty centuries. I believe that in this country, in order to foster the ideas which are to replace the old-fashioned ones, what we must do is to be crossed with

other races. All of us who are a bit enlightened—why, let us marry foreign wives!”

Sometimes we got to quarreling over these profundities, and would roar at each other while loitering at the table or even while eating. These disputes usually gave us the greatest eagerness in the play of mind on mind; and even in the midst of our hottest arguments we felt drawn toward each other by the conviction that though our opinions were so antagonistic, we were able to understand each other and to spur each other on.

We had come to be inseparable. We helped each other in our studies; we used to go to walk together, even when Luis was going to promenade before the house of a certain outlandish sweetheart he had discovered; we used to sit at the same table in the Levante Café; when we had a little spare cash we would go together to our favorite resort—the gallery in the Teatro Real. All of us students at Doña Jesusa's were musical; we were all ready to die for “*L'Africaine*,” and “*Les Huguenots*,” especially the Cuban, who had a musical craze. His retentive memory would store up not only

the music but the words as well, and we used to amuse ourselves on getting home by making him sing over the whole opera.

"Trinidad," we would say, for that was his name, "Come now, sing the love duet between *Vasco* and *Selika*." "Trinidad, there now, the poniard scene." "Come, Triny, sing that about *O paradiso*. Now about *Copre fuoco*." "Triny, sing the Protestant psalm. Now, the violins start in—now come the oboe's notes, when *Marcelo* appears." The mocking-bird would sing all we called for, reproducing with astonishing exactness the slightest details of the instrumentation, until at length fairly worn out, he would exclaim, beseechingly :

"Let me go to bed. I see you are making a fool of me."

CHAPTER III.

ONE morning, or, rather, afternoon, almost at the end of the term, we rushed out of school, almost running from Turco Street to Clavel Street. You must remember that from eight o'clock, when we took our muddy chocolate, until half-past one, the hour when our drawing-class closed, our recitations came along one after the other; and we had nothing to sustain our strength, but now and then a sausage which we would surreptitiously purchase from the janitor, or some scrap which we would filch at the boarding-house and carry along. Smelling our lunch from afar, we mounted two steps at a time, and on entering the dining-room, I came face to face with my Uncle Felipe, who said to me, abruptly, "You must lunch with me to-day at Fornos's. I imagine that eatables are scarce here."

"I should be glad to go, but I have so much

studying to do just now," I answered, affecting reluctance.

"Bah, you'll not lose a year's time if you don't study to-day. Come along, for we must have a talk—a talk about a great many things," he added, with an air of mystery.

The truth is—and it would do no good to conceal it, because it will be made very evident in the course of this story—that I had not merely no affection or respect for my Uncle Felipe, but not even any sort of attachment or as much as gratitude for the favors he was conferring upon me. Quite the contrary. I know it does me no credit to say so, and that ingratitude is the ugliest of faults; but I know, also, that I am not naturally ungrateful, and in order to justify, or at least explain myself, I will sketch in silhouette my Uncle Felipe's physical and moral characteristics, to do which I must allude to some matters that are of the nature of family secrets.

My baptismal name is Salustio, my paternal surnames are Meléndez Ramos, my maternal, Unceta Cardoso. That name Unceta indi-

cates plainly that my mother's father was a Basque, and came from Guipuzcoa, to be more exact; and Cardoso—that's where the mischief comes in. It seems that the Cardosos of Marín—I was born in Pontevedra, and my mother's family came from the little seaport of Marín—were a broken branch of the Portuguese trunk of Cardoso Pereira, a Jewish trunk, if there is such a thing. How did the fact come to my knowledge that my mother's ancestors were Jews? Just find out if you can who tells these things to children. One day when I was nine or ten, unable to restrain my curiosity any longer, I asked my mother:

“Mamma, is it true that we belong to the Jewish race?”

With fire flashing from her eyes, she lifted her hand and cuffed my ears soundly, crying:

“If you say that again, I'll break all the bones in your body!”

That chastisement left the impression in my mind that to be a Jew was a sore disgrace; and two or three years later, when one of my school-

mates at Pontevedra threw it in my face, calling out,

Cardoso's a Jew,
And a tricky one, too!

I seized my slate and broke it over his skull.

I cannot be sure when I reached the religious crisis, or that period in which boys scrutinize their beliefs, sift them and finally discard them, feeling a pain from the loss of their faith like that caused by the pulling of a double-tooth. I do not think I ever experienced such a change, or felt such agonizing doubts, or such remorse and longing when looking upon a Gothic church. I was naturally skeptical and took up, if not with atheism, at least with religious indifference, as if it were something perfectly congenial to me.

I had never been "perverted" by reading any particular book, nor by hearing a person of "dangerous ideas" discourse upon religion; nobody "opened my eyes," for I believe that I came into the world with them wide open. As many young men cannot say exactly how and when they lost the innocence of childhood in matters relating to the sexes,

so I cannot fix the precise time when my faith began to waver, for, indeed, I do not recall that it was ever very steadfast. I believe that I was born a rationalist.

But it is singular that in spite of that, the insult, "tricky Jew," always clung to my mind like a poisoned dart. My fellow-students never dared repeat it before me, but notwithstanding, I never could forget it for a single day. When I was about to graduate, quite a tall, shapely fellow by that time, I became acquainted with Don Wenceslao Viñal, a queer individual, but a good deal of a scholar, mousing around in libraries, filled with all sorts of strange learned trifles, and very well informed in regard to Galician archæology and history. He used to lend me old books, and sometimes carry me off to walk in the vicinity of Pontevedra in search of beautiful views and ruined buildings. I used to torment him with questions, to keep up my reputation as a studious youngster.

One day I got it into my head that Viñal might clear up my doubts in regard to the Jewish question, so I boldly said:

“See here, Don Wenceslao, is it true that there are families living in Marín, who are of Jewish descent, and that the Cardoso family is one?”

“Yes, indeed,” answered the bibliomaniac quietly, without noticing the great eagerness of my question. “They are of Portuguese origin; that is so certain that there is much antipathy shown them in Marín. It is said that they have not abjured their faith, and that they still keep up their Jewish rites; that they change their linen on Saturdays instead of Sundays, and that they will not eat a bit of pork for love or money.”

“And do you believe all that?”

“For my part, I think it is all tittle-tattle and old woman’s gossip—I mean in regard to their observing the Jewish rites; but that they are of Jewish origin, cannot be denied. Furthermore, if I have time, I’ll rummage through some old papers I know of, and we’ll disinter a certain Juan Manuel Cardoso Muiño, a native of Marín, whom the Inquisition of Santiago tortured and flogged, on the ground that he was a Judaizer. He was besides an incurable

leper. So you see I know all about it, you curious fellow. I'll look up the papers."

"No, no, it's not necessary. I only wanted to find out—mere idle curiosity. Don't trouble yourself about it, Don Wenceslao."

For a month I was sorely afraid that the fellow actually would look the matter up, or perhaps even send an absurd communication to some wretched sheet in Pontevedra, as he used to do every two years, whenever he imagined that he had discovered some important and unpublished data which might serve as an historical key to the ancient kingdom of Galicia. I therefore carefully avoided recurring to the conversation about the Judaizers of Marín. This very precaution indicated that I was not quite reconciled to the drubbing which had been inflicted upon Juan Manuel Cardoso Muiño.

Later on, when I left Pontevedra for Madrid to begin my studies preparatory to the School of Engineering, I often recalled that stigma, and tried to view it in a sensible light. It seemed to me absurd to place so much importance upon a thing that, in our present social

state, has none whatever in the light of good judgment and the philosophy of history. The Jews are, in fact, a people of noble origin, who have given us "the religious conception"—a conception to which, viewed either as a sublime product of the mind or as a lofty flight of the imagination, I attributed great importance.

In another point of view, also, that of social standing, it no longer seemed right to me to despise Hebrews. The stigma of the Middle Ages has been so far obliterated that wealthy Jewish capitalists intermarry with the most aristocratic families in France, and give splendid receptions and banquets at which the Spanish aristocracy deigns to appear. Aside from these outward considerations, I used to fix my thought on others, higher and deeper, and remembered that great thinker Baruch Spinoza, who was of Jewish race; as were also Meyerbeer and Heine.

In fact, as I assured myself again and again, there was not the slightest reason for feeling so sore at having descended from the Jews, except the unreason of an instinctive aversion,

born of sentimental hereditary prejudice. There was no doubt about it; the blood of the old Christians which flowed in my veins, shrank with horror from intermingling with that of the Jewish race. It is very singular, I thought, that the inmost part of our being thus resists our will and reason, and that, in spite of ourselves, there exists within us a rebellious and self-governed something, over which our own convictions have no control whatever, but which is only affected by those of past generations.

And here my Uncle Felipe again appears on the scene. I do not know whether I remarked before that he was my mother's brother, somewhat younger than she was. He was about forty-two or forty-three at the time our story commences, and was considered "quite good-looking;" perhaps because he was tall, well-formed, and somewhat stout, with thick hair and whiskers. But at the first glance my uncle showed all the unmistakable traces of a Jewish origin. He certainly did not look like the images of Christ, but resembled, rather, another Semitic type, that of the sensual

Jews, such as the scribes, Pharisees and doctors of the law, as they appear in pictures and sculptures representing scenes in the Crucifixion.

The first time I ever visited the Prado Museum I was struck by the great number of faces resembling my Uncle Felipe's. Above all was this the case in Rubens's paintings, in those big, fat, florid Jews, with their hooked noses and gluttonous, sensual lips, hard, suspicious gaze, and with profiles like a bird of prey. Some of them, exaggerated by the Flemish master's heavy strokes, were caricatures of my uncle, but most faithful ones. His red beard and curly hair made my uncle look precisely like the figure of one of the executioners carried in the processions of Holy Week. And to me it was very plain, it was my uncle's deicide face which from childhood inspired me with that stolid, sullen, insuperable aversion, like that we feel for a reptile though it does us no harm. Not even my rationalistic ideas, nor my scientific positivism, nor the knowledge that I was supported and protected by that hated being, could rid me of this aversion.

"These are the tricks of art," I reflected. "For five hundred years past the painters have endeavored to bring together in half a dozen faces the expression of avarice, of gluttony, cruelty, selfishness, and hypocrisy, and so have succeeded in making the Jewish type so repugnant. Luis is right. Tradition, that binding cement, that mold which gathers in our very souls, is stronger than culture or progress. Instead of reflecting, we feel; and not even that, because it is the dead who feel for us."

Sometimes, in order not to acknowledge myself guilty of fear or childishness, I sought other reasons for the antipathy I felt toward my uncle. I make a great point of personal neatness, while my uncle, without being careless in his dress, was not very cleanly in his person; his nails were sometimes not immaculate, and his teeth betrayed a tinge of green. My dislike for my uncle was also stimulated by my seeing that he, without any desert whatever, as the result of no moral or intellectual qualities, had yet been able to secure a good position. I do not mean to say that he was wicked or stupid, but that he was

one of those intermediate hybrid creatures, of whom we can never quite discover, whether they are bright or stupid, good or knavish, although they are strongly inclined to be the latter. A mushroom springing up in the corruption of our politics, and growing rank in the deadly shade of electoral intrigue, he was condemned by my puritanical and radical ideas, with all the rigid inflexibility of youth, to the punishment of general contempt. Although he was not as high in power as some of his fellow - bosses, his unjustifiable prosperity sufficed to stir all my youthful indignation against him.

When my uncle was licensed to practice law, he owned some land and a house or two in Pontevedra, which he had inherited from his father. This property would not yield him an income of \$1000 annually, at five per cent. How it happened that this meager fortune was more than doubled in bank stocks and four per cent. government bonds a few years later, let any one explain who understands how such miracles are worked; so common nowadays that they no longer surprise anybody. My

uncle did not practice his profession; the law was for him, what it usually is for Spaniards in political life—an avocation, a passport. He went into politics cautiously, swimming, but keeping an eye on his clothes. He was elected provincial deputy several times, and picked away at his pleasure in the fig-basket of offices. In order not to waste his money in electoral campaigns, he contented himself with going to the Cortes only once, standing for one of those vacancies which occur on the eve of a general election, and which usually go to the benefit of journalists. My uncle, by the favor of Don Vicente Sotopaña, the all-powerful “boss” of Galicia, carried off the prize without spending a single penny; and took the oath the very day before the House was dissolved, leaving the way open to become a Governor, and later on—who can tell?—a Councilor of State or Minister of Public Instruction. Governor he was very quickly, sometimes as acting head of the province, sometimes as executive in his own right.

From time to time some good thing fell mysteriously into his lap; and they had a great

deal to say in Pontevedra about the expropriation of some of my uncle's property, which the city council bought at a fabulous price. But it is neither pleasant nor profitable to recount these transactions. My uncle was one of the petty third-rate politicians who never dip into the dish without bringing out a fat slice. His method consisted in cutting down expenses and adding up profits, without despising the most insignificant.

They used to say in his praise that he was long-headed. Now such a trait appeared to me only another symptom of Judaism, though, perhaps I was unjust in this, because many bosses in my part of the country, though of the purest Aryan extraction, are not behind Uncle Felipe in that respect.

Sometimes I felt conscience-stricken on account of my dislike toward my nearest relative. I accused myself of being without proper feeling, because I was returning only hatred for favors. If my uncle were mean and stingy, he deserved all the more credit for meeting a good part of the expenses of my education. And I could not deny that

my uncle showed a liking for me, in his own fashion. When he was in Madrid, he used to give me an occasional quarter to go to the theater; and two or three times during his stay he would invite me to breakfast or dine with him at Fornos's; and he was never strict with me. He used to treat me like a pleasure-loving young lad of not much consequence, questioning me about my tricks and frolics, about my fellow-boarders' pranks, and about the girls over the way, who were amusing.

Sometimes he even dropped into worse talk, boasting that he was an expert in all matters relating to licentious amours. After dinner, when the wine, the coffee and the liquors had flushed his cheeks, he would display his expertness, treating of dubious subjects which sometimes nauseated me. I did not dare to protest, for we men are ashamed to appear innocent; but the truth is, my youthful palate refused that spicy, too-highly-seasoned dish. Sometimes it happened, also, that at night the indecent images called up by his conversation would assault and excite me, until I would freely bathe the back of my head and neck

with cold water out of the pitcher. In winter as well as in summer this proceeding would refresh my brain and enable me to forget myself in my books again.

Aversion, or rather antipathy, is as powerful a motive force as love, and I was looking forward to the end of my studies as the close of a patronage which I felt to be unbearable. To be my own master, to earn enough money to live on, to pay back to my uncle what he had given me—that was my dream; and I clung to its wings in order to reach the top of the dry hill of machinery, construction and topography.

Now that I have drawn my Uncle Felipe's portrait, I will add, that when we found ourselves in the little, dark, low room in Fornos's, seated at the table where the waiter was placing a dish of radishes, Vienna rolls, butter, and the rest of the lunch; after making several remarks on various unimportant subjects, he said, clapping me on the shoulder, but without looking me in the face, "Guess what I have to tell you."

"How can I?"

“Well, what use is it for you to study so hard, if you cannot?”—said he, making an effort to appear jocose.

I shrugged my shoulders, and my uncle added:

“I am going to get married.”

CHAPTER IV.

IT was doubtless in order to lead up to this piece of news that he had ordered a caraffe of iced champagne, a luxury always to be enjoyed, and the more so that the heat was beginning to grow intense and the air to be parched in Madrid. I held the delicate glass, filled to the brim with that cool, golden liquid, and could not repress a start of surprise, when I heard his announcement, so that I dashed a little cascade of it on the table-cloth.

My uncle avoided meeting my gaze, though I stared at him with my eyes wide open in amazement. He pretended to be picking up the bread crumbs, and to be fastening his napkin to his button-hole, but he was looking at me out of the corner of his eye. As he observed that I did not say a word, he went on, with a forced voice: "I shall be very glad if you and your mother approve of my marriage."

I, in the mean time, was absorbed in thought. Now I understand it. There is some mystery hidden here. His next neighbor must have lost her husband, or else they desire to legitimize their offspring. That's the way it always works with old bachelors.

Finally, as I thought I ought to say something, I asked in a faltering tone: "Does my mother know about it?"

"Yes, I wrote to her yesterday."

"I presume that you informed her of the name of your bride-elect?"

"Yes, it so happens that I first met her at Ullosa, at your mother's, and became acquainted with her there."

When the ice was once broken, my uncle kept on chattering very fast, like one wanting to free his mind in a hurry.

"It seems impossible that you should not know about it," he said. "Last summer your mother and she became very intimate. She is Carmiña Aldao, don't you know? Carmiña Aldao of Pontevedra."

"I don't know her; however, the name sounds familiar. Perhaps my mother may

have written to me about her. I don't know. You know I had no vacation last summer."

"That's true. Well, she is the young Aldao girl, the daughter of the owner of that fine property called the Tejo."

"Is she an only child?" I inquired, somewhat sharply, thinking perhaps self-interest was the motive for the marriage.

"Oh, no! she has a brother who also lives in Pontevedra."

"Well, I don't know her," I repeated. "But anyhow, if she is going to marry you, I'll have plenty of time to become acquainted with her."

"Of course you will, as I am going to take you to the wedding, my boy. As soon as you pass your examination, you must go there with me. The thing will not take place before Carmen's birth-day, and between now and then I have yet to find a house, and to furnish it,—so you see!"

"Ah, so you are going to live in Madrid?"

"Yes, the bride wants to do so. I'll take you to the wedding, you may be sure of that. We shall be married at Tejo! Look

here, I don't know what your mother will think of it. She has a temper somewhat peculiar. So if you write to her, tell her that I shall not give you the cold shoulder, when I get married. Until you finish your studies——”

“I believe I didn't say anything about that,” I exclaimed, while for the second time the glass of champagne trembled in my hand.

“Well, I do. Don't get excited, for there is no cause for it. I suppose that I am master of my own actions, and do not hurt anybody by getting married.”

“Who talks about its hurting?” I cried, feeling myself turn pale under a rush of sudden hatred which tempted me to throw myself upon that man.

“Well, if you take it in that way——”

“I don't take it in any way whatever! You are entirely free to do what you like; and if you do anything for me, it is not because I have asked you for it. I'll pay back to you the money you are spending on my education, if I live.”

In spite of the fact that he always got very

red, when animated by eating and drinking, my uncle also turned pale. His lips were compressed, and his eyes gleamed with anger.

"If you were not a whipper-snapper, I'd be tempted to answer you roughly. What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh. You are just like your father, the most ungrateful and ill-behaved man in the world."

"Be kind enough not to mix up my father's name in this matter, with which it has nothing whatever to do," I replied, feeling that if I did not exert my self-control, I was liable to seize the bottle and smash it over his head.

"I only mentioned your father to say that though one always tries to help you, you are always growling and scratching. However, I was not going to get married without telling you about it. It is easy to see that you don't like it at all. Come, my boy, have patience. It was not a thing to consult you about beforehand. The bill, waiter," he added, knocking his spoon against the glass.

We had raised our voices pretty high and some of the loiterers at the adjoining tables turned their heads and looked at us. I felt

ashamed, and frowning, though trembling inwardly, shook the crumbs off my coat and made a movement to rise. My humiliation had a real and immediate foundation, seeing my uncle put a bank-note on the plate on which the waiter had presented the bill. That note I desperately wished I could have taken out of my own pocket. I breathed more freely (boy-like) when a good deal of change in silver was brought back—more than five dollars. With the tip of his forefinger, my uncle pushed a couple of nickels toward the waiter, and getting up, took down his hat from the rack, saying dryly :

“Let’s go.” But on emerging from the dark restaurant into the sunshine, he immediately controlled himself, and, with the adaptability which characterized him in his business relations and political schemes, extended his hand to me, saying, half in joke :

“When you feel better, come to see me. I want to show you your prospective aunt’s photograph.”

I returned to my boarding-house in a very bad humor, feeling dissatisfied with myself,

but without knowing very well the cause of my mental disturbance. All the animosity I felt toward my uncle was not sufficient to prevent me from recognizing the fact that, on this occasion, I was the one who had conducted himself badly. Luis agreed with me on this subject, when, on questioning me in the evening as to the cause of my ill-humor, I told him what had occurred.

“Well, my dear fellow, you were altogether in the wrong, and your uncle was perfectly right. You must have known that he would get married some day.”

“I don’t care a rap whether he marries or not,” I exclaimed, hotly. “What does it matter to me, anyhow?”

“It matters a great deal,” replied the sensible fellow. “It makes a great deal of difference to any nephew when his uncle, his mother’s only brother, gets married. It matters so much to you that you are much worried over the match. But all that you can do is to make the best of it. Make concessions, you eager fellow, for that’s the way government is carried on.”

“Don’t talk to me about matrimonial opportunism !”

“There isn’t a subject with which opportunism will better square than this very marriage. Your uncle is going to get married? Well, then all you have to do is to make the best of the situation ; try to get into the good graces of your dear little aunt—all the more so as she is really a charming girl.”

“Have you seen her?”

“No, I have not seen her ; but when I was in Villagarcía last year, taking sea baths, I met some girls from Cambados who told me all about her. I recall it perfectly.”

“What did they say?”

“Oh, girl’s talk. That she is handsome, and plays the piano very well ; that they were going to make her father a marquis, and so forth and so on. It seems that the girl is not a beggar. I understand that her father has a fat income.”

“And how is it that my uncle can carry off such a prize, rich, beautiful, and young? He must have nerve!”

“Are you crazy? What is there to despise

in your uncle? Because he did not care to study much, that does not prove that he is not quick-witted and a great manager. He has almost as much political influence as Don Vicente himself, and is certain of a political future. Come now, don't be stupid. Go to the wedding and try to ingratiate yourself with your dear little auntie. Don't be glum, for it will be all the worse for you if you are."

"Well, now, you surprise me. If any one should hear you run on, who does not know me, he would think that I am deluding myself with false hopes in regard to inheriting my uncle's money, and that I am disappointed at seeing it escape from my grasp."

"That's not the question," argued my friend, resenting my words a little; "I don't assert that you are capable of any meanness for the sake of a bit of cash, or of running after it. But what I do say is that, until you finish your education, you cannot get along without your uncle—and I fancy that you don't want to be left in the lurch."

Before many hours passed, I began to see that my friend was right, and had talked com-

mon sense. And as our own errors seem plainer, when we see them committed by other people, whom we consider inferior to ourselves in mental capacity and culture, I more clearly perceived the necessity of making the best of the situation, after reading a letter which the postman brought me the next day.

I recognized its handwriting at once, and saw by its thickness that it was stuffed with furious complaints and outpourings, such as spring to the lips or flow from the pen under the shock of unexpected events. In order to be able to read it quietly, I repaired to a little coffee-house near by, which was entirely deserted at that hour.

The waiter, after the regular "what'll it be?" brought me some beer, and left me in peace. I took a swallow, and while enjoying the bitter flavor of the fermented hops, broke the seal, and pored over the thin sheets written in a clear, small, Spanish hand-writing, with several slight errors in spelling, particularly in the use of double *r*'s which indicated great vehemence of temper; without a suspicion of punctuation, or division into paragraphs, or capital letters. Al-

though it may seem strange, all these things lend a certain forcible iteration and rapidity of movement to this kind of angry, feminine letters, really doubling their effect.

It was just what I had imagined it to be, a furious tirade against Uncle Felipe's marriage, alternating with the narration of events, some of which were entirely new to me. I will copy a few paragraphs without adding so much as a period or comma, or disentangling the grammar, or suppressing the repetitions :

"You see now Salustio how much a poor mother suffers without any hope but that of seeing you well established and being somebody to-morrow or next day and her greatest hope that your old prig of an uncle might leave you something whose duty it was to do so if he had a conscience and the worst of all is that he will have children and you will be left with your mouth wide open without what belongs to you for although I call it yours I am not talking nonsense for you must know that your uncle in the division of my father's property for my mother did not have so much as a bed to die on but father left a handsome property

and your uncle grabbed it almost all up and left me almost in the street though I don't know how he worked it and set the trap so that I only had three or four crusts while he ate up all the soft part of the loaf himself I know not how he consented to give me Ullosa that was a wonder for he took all the houses and lots in Pontevedra and afterwards fixed up a fine bargain with the city council and frightened the brave schemers as soon as your father died whom Felipe bothered dreadfully because he was empowered by the clergy and compromised him frightfully you can't recollect about it for you were but a child when your father died who is now in heaven well at that time I said to him with great dignity of manner Felipe it is one thing to be a good sister and another to be obliged to beg and I have a son and no bread to give him so I speak freely I shall have the partition looked into for there was cheating there and in this way I cannot live for I am going to educate my son and he goes on to reply very patronizingly don't feel anxious I will not abandon you but will give your son the best profession to be found don't go to law

for law suits are the ruination of a property and only fatten the lawyers be quiet silly creature for whose shall be what I have I am not going to carry it to the other world and as for marrying I shall not marry any sooner than the devil does a loose ox is hard to catch I can swear to you that your uncle said this and I haven't changed a single word."

Without doubt, on reaching this point, the moral necessity of attending to her punctuation must have suddenly taken possession of my mother's mind with great force, and in order not to do things by halves, she added a whole string of periods and two exclamation points side by side. ! !

"Oh my son any one who trusts the word of a man without religion or conscience and now he comes out with his nonsense that the idea of getting married came to him suddenly I don't know what he saw in the Aldao girl she is quite plain and in delicate health and in sober earnest I don't know how it will turn out for in her own house she has the bad example her father sets by being mixed up with her mother's maid who has been there for

years and two other little girls in the house who knows if they are daughters or nieces of the gadabout anyhow the girl takes up with your uncle so they say solely in order to get away from that infernal place where they abuse her and don't give her enough to eat but I don't know how your uncle will treat her for he comes of a bad race and is the very image of the Jews who come out in the procession of Holy Thursday I feel ashamed of being his sister for God had reason in singling him out for punishment mark my words for I know that God is very just and they want you to visit them on your vacation to see their beautiful place I am a silly if the Evil One didn't tempt me to bring Carmen Aldao home next summer it will be different I'll shine by my absence and we'll see how they get on if they leave you out in the cold we will have the partition papers looked into and there will be an awful time for your uncle cannot make a fool of me and I am ready to go to law as long as I have any clothes to my back."

I went on reading the letter, between swallows of the beer. It affected me differently

from what my mother had intended. My uncle's schemes to get hold of my inheritance, all that about the partition, instead of arousing in me justifiable indignation, soothed my mind. I was delighted to have reason for complaining of my uncle instead of being grateful to him, and now that I knew his wicked conduct, it seemed to me that the throbbing of my deadly hatred for him was diminishing. At least I no longer need feel conscience-stricken for hating him; and that somewhat consoled me.

I at once wrote my mother a very discreet letter, the very quintessence of good sense. I advised her to restrain herself, insisting that it was very unlikely that my uncle who had helped us so far, should leave us to our own resources at the last, and saying how useless and futile litigation and lawsuits seemed to me. What had been done, should be left as it was; for it was of no use to kick against the pricks. It was absurd to think that a man in the prime of life, strong and well-preserved, should keep single in order to please us. A few idle words could not possibly bind him to

remain unmarried. As for attending the wedding or not, we would discuss that matter later. Meanwhile, calmness and patience.

I read the letter to Portal, who applauded it greatly, saying:

“That is the right way; make concessions, compromise, and avoid the breakers. That’s what I like. Follow my plan, and at least conform outwardly, for nobody can see what your inner feelings are.”

“Outside or inside, what in thunder does it matter to me that my uncle is going to marry? How you do talk!” I exclaimed, feeling hurt. Portal wagged his head, and I added, “My mother asserts that my uncle’s betrothed is homely.”

“Who knows? Perhaps she is, and it would be all the better if she were. Anyhow, she has a pretty name, Carmiña Aldao, don’t you like it?”

“The name—oh, well, that’s good enough.”

“You should try to captivate your uncle’s betrothed,” resumed Portal, after a short silence. “Yes, captivate her, that’s a good idea. Make her love you, my boy—I mean no

harm—like a brother, or a son, or however you wish. Anyway, try to make her like you. But do it slyly, skillfully; be polite; no outbreaks or scandal. Your uncle is an old rooster, and she is nearer your own age. But be careful, youngster, for you are a bit like the youthful Werther. Take care, don't let us have any family dramas."

CHAPTER V.

I WILL pass over all the events of the end of the term and examinations, for all that the reader most interested in my future will care to know is that I passed that year; I had my books at my tongue's end.

The boy from Zamora was likewise successful, but Portal and Trinito did not come off so well; they had not worked hard enough. The Cuban bore his disappointment with his usual indolent composure; but Portal tore out his hair, and laid the blame on the professor's spite, and on the influence artfully brought to bear in favor of other students, the practical result of which had been to put all the strain on him.

"They have cut me square in two, they have fairly smashed me!" cried the unhappy fellow, forgetting all about that pleasant theory of his in regard to adjusting one's self, making concessions, conforming and waiting.

His calmness in the field of theory turned into furious impatience in actual practice. But he had felt so sure of success that year!

I left him fuming with rage, and went to tell my uncle the good news of my success. I felt greatly pleased, because it seemed to me that every step forward was another victory over my hateful protector, and was like breaking one of the links of the golden chain which bound me. My uncle lived at the Ambassador's hotel, but the *concierge* told me, with a knowing air: "He is usually at his new house, at this time of day. He does not stay here much of the time. Don't you know, sir? He has rented a house—but he does not sleep there yet. Where is it, do you ask? Why, Claudio Coello Street, No. ——"

I took a car and got off almost at the door of the new dwelling, going up to the second floor. I did not have to ring the bell, for the door was wide open, and in the reception-room there was a man seated Turk-fashion, and sewing strips of fine matting together, with a big needle.

My uncle was pacing up and down in a good-

sized parlor, bare of furniture, and was agreeably surprised to see me.

“Halloo, Paul Pry! You here! Come in and take a look at everything.”

“They gave me your address at the hotel, so I came to tell you——”

“Why, come in at once! I want you to look around. What do you think of the house, eh? It is very good for the price. But then, the street is not very central. The parlor is not fixed yet; they have not brought the *tête-à-tête*, nor the large mirror, nor the hangings. One loses all patience with these upholsterers! The boudoir and the bed-room are farther along. Come in, come in!”

I entered and looked abstractedly at the boudoir, which was the extreme of commonplace, with its white marble mantle-piece, its arm-chairs upholstered in raw silk with a plush border of a darker shade, its tiny writing-desk, and its theatrical-looking toilet-table, dressed with imitation lace and adorned with bows of ribbon of the same color as the curtains. The narrow looking-glass over the mantle-piece did not have a gilt frame, but one of plush like

that on the arm-chairs and sofa. My uncle wanted me to observe all this style, for he was like all niggardly people, when they make up their minds to spend anything extra, in wanting people to know about it.

“Do you see the little mirror?” he said. “That is the way they frame them now—a fashionable freak. And don’t think that they are any cheaper. Whew! they cost three times as much, my dear fellow. That empty space there, in front of the window, is for the piano. My *fiancée* plays beautifully.”

From the boudoir we passed into the *sanctum sanctorum*, the nest, or bedroom, which was a roomy apartment with stuccoed walls. The wooden bridal-couch, which was very broad and quite low, and had a carved head-board, was standing in the center of the room.

“The two mattresses are still wanting,” murmured my uncle, with a complacent smile. “Just fancy, the upholsterer has got it into his head to make them of rich, costly satin. I told him that cotton damask was good enough. If I had not been careful to furnish the house, your prospective aunt,

who does not know what people are in Madrid, would have been swindled right and left. Look at those commodes ; would you believe that the two cost me twenty-five dollars ? People are so extravagant nowadays. Come now, and take a look at my study."

We went through the hall and into his study, already completely furnished with its large desk, like a cabinet officer's, and a big book - case which seemed ashamed to contain nothing but heavy government reports and half a dozen foolish and indecent novels, paper-covered, and very dirty. My uncle opened the glass doors, and taking a handful of books by Paul de Kock, Amancio Peratoner, and the Chinese Da-gar-li-kao, gave them to me, saying, with a suggestive smile : " I make you a present of them, my boy. Don't get corrupted by reading them, do you understand ? Just amuse yourself for a moment, and that's all. Married men cannot keep such contraband goods in their homes. Send after them, or do you prefer to take them with you ? "

I answered, that I had no time to delve in such serious writings, nor did they, in fact, amuse me.

From the study we proceeded to visit the dining-room, which was already furnished with sideboards and chandeliers, and then inspected even the humbler regions of kitchen and store-room.

Back of the dining-room there was a cheerful little room, with a window overlooking some vacant lots.

"This is our spare room," said my uncle; "so we shall be able to entertain a guest."

After thus examining the entire house, we went back to the study, and my uncle took out a cigar, and offered me another one, praising the brand; but, as I did not smoke, I gave it back, so that he might be able, in his own words, "to pay off his debts with somebody else." While he was taking the first puff, I told him the good news about my having passed my examination. His face lighted up with sincere joy. Two or three times I saw him carry his hand to his pocket, instinctively, while he murmured in a smothered tone, as he still held his cigar between his teeth:

"Well done, man; well done! So another year has passed, and you only have two to go.

Bravo! At that rate you'll soon be building bridges over the Lerez. I vow, I'll push you forward on the works ordered by the legislature. One must know how to pull out the stops. You may understand all about problems in algebra, and be able to fling equations and logarithms about; but I know all about the key-board."

When I rose to leave, my uncle got up his resolution, put his hand, not into his vest pocket, but into his inside coat pocket, brought out his pocket-book without saying a word, and took out a greasy bank-note.

How often have I observed that brief struggle in my uncle's mind between his parsimony and the quick instinct which notified him when and why it was necessary, advantageous, or extremely agreeable to spend his money. I never saw him spend a cent without perceiving that effort and inward struggle in his soul—the painful and longing good-by which he gave to his money. It was evident that reason advised him to make the expenditure, but always had to fight with his temperament. To superficial observers, even if my uncle did

not seem lavish, he was far from appearing avaricious; but to me, who studied him closely, with the cruel sharp-sightedness of hatred, his owl's beak revealed avarice, though checked, kept latent, and in that larva-form to which civilization reduces so many passions or frenzies that, in other days, when the impulses of the individual had greater power, used to reach a tragic development.

My uncle was a frustrated miser; reflection, the power of surrounding circumstances, as well as the desire for enjoyment and comfort which modern society fosters, all counteracted his disposition—for nowadays an old-fashioned miser would appear absurd, and nobody would have anything to do with him. But under the cover of the successful man of the present, who knew how to acquire riches in order to enjoy them, I could see the Hebrew of the Middle Ages, with his greedy and rapacious claws. Whenever my uncle let any money go, he would turn slightly pale, his jaw would drop, and his eyes would be cast down as though to conceal their expression.

Well, he handed me the bank-note, saying:

“This is to enable you to attend my wedding. They are selling cheap excursion tickets now, round-trip, do you understand? Yes, they are good for two months, or I don’t know how long, so that will be very convenient for you. Of course, you’ll travel second-class, for third-class is too uncomfortable. You can write at once to your mother what day you expect to start. The sooner the better, because you’ll not only get more pure country air, but you’ll save your board at the same time. Your mother is at Ullosa, and from there to Pontevedra and Tejo is only a step. Come a few days before the wedding. I don’t know as I told you ; it will take place on the day of Our Lady of Carmen. There is room enough for everybody at Tejo. It is an old castle, which has been rebuilt and fixed up recently. You’ll not be in the way. Try to make your mother go also ; I am afraid she is so queer that she’ll not do so.”

It was getting late in the afternoon, and the man at work at the matting had finished his task ; so my uncle put the key in his pocket, and went out with me. We turned down the

street, and got on a horse-car. When we came to the Puerta del Sol, instead of going toward the hotel, we took another car and proceeded toward Ancha de San Bernardo Street.

"Come with me," said the Hebrew. "As it is now vacation time, a little recreation will not harm you. You'll see some fine people." Although I suspected what his "fine people" might be, I could not help feeling surprised when a very fine-looking girl opened the door for us. This handsome damsel had on a red calico wrapper, with pink flowers, low slippers, and wore her hair in that style of large bands pasted down over the ears which the women of the lower classes in Madrid have discarded at present for cork-screw curls.

I warmly admired her raven black hair, her beautiful form, her cheeks, where the fresh color struggled to show itself through a thick coating of rice-powder, which she had daubed on hurriedly. Her velvety eyes, bold, but sweet by reason of their fine lashes, fastened themselves upon mine, and said something to me, to which I immediately responded in the same mute language.

Behind this lovely specimen of the Madrid type appeared the head of a younger girl; not so good-looking, thin, mocking, and combed and powdered like her elder sister.

My uncle entered with the air of a lord and master.

"Come here at once, all of you. I have brought you a young man, and you must be careful how you treat him."

Saying this, he led on over the loosened tiles of the passage-way to a small parlor, without any furniture excepting a sofa and two arm-chairs with calico coverings, an old mahogany shelf, several cheap and gaudy chromos, a little table on which stood several bottles of mucilage, broken plates, brushes, and scissors; scattered all around, on the table, chairs, sofa, floor, shelf, and I believe even on the walls and the ceiling, were endless remnants of silk, satin, and plush; blue, yellow, green, pink, and of all the colors of the rainbow, mixed up with strips of paste-board, circular pieces of the same, gilt and silver tinsel, ribbons and galloons, chromos and paints, flowers, and the thousand other accessories be-

longing to the pleasing trade of covering and decorating boxes of sweetmeats "for weddings and christenings,"—for this was the official occupation of those buxom girls. A woman, about fifty years old, shriveled, untidy, with very weak eyes, was busy in decorating a lilac-silk bag by pasting on each side a bunch of lilies and an angel's face that she had cut from a chromo containing at least ten legions of angels. She saluted my uncle, saying, "Good afternoon," in a dry manner, and went on pasting lilies and angels. Then my uncle, turning toward the girls who were following us, tapped each one under the chin in succession, and introduced them to me as "Señorita Belén—Señorita Cinta."

After that, drawing near to the table, he exclaimed, jestingly :

"What a barricade! Come, girls, clear things away! I must treat my nephew."

The old woman then interfered, exclaiming harshly :

"That's it! waste the afternoon for us, so that when the time comes to deliver the work at the shop, we'll just tell them that there was

too much chattering, isn't that so? As for things to eat, there's nothing here but a miserable dish of rice and mussels."

My uncle's lips contracted, as they always did previous to his disbursing any money, but that movement was only momentary, and drawing forth a coin from his vest pocket he gave it to the smaller girl, saying:

"Cintita, just get some sherry wine, and biscuits, and a few oranges also."

This argument was convincing to the old woman.

"Gents, I'll go into the next room to finish my work of sticking on these angels so as to leave the table free; make yourselves at home."

They brought the wine and biscuits, and got some cracked, dirty glasses from the depths of the kitchen, and the scene became quite animated. Belén took down her guitar, and sang something or other in that low, hoarse voice, which reminds one of the cooing of a dove, displaying all the grace of her southern beauty, and showing her pretty, arched foot, which rested on the round of the chair.

Cinta brought out a tambourine, and put it on her head like a hat, laughing merrily all the while, and amusing herself by throwing orange-peels at us. Then she got a little old India crape shawl out of a drawer, and put it on, while she made all sorts of contortions, saying that she wanted to have a regular spree.

Then ensued bravos, sky-larking, pushing, racing round the room, chairs upset, and pieces of silk flying through the air. Afterward they made us strum on the guitar, and sing, while the girls danced. The wine flowed freely; my uncle breaking the bottle against the edge of the marble table, for we had no corkscrew. As we soon dispatched the contents of that bottle, he told Cinta to bring up another one.

"I have spent all the cash," answered the girl. My uncle scowled a little, and said:

"But I gave you four dollars."

Belén came to her rescue, exclaiming, "Come now, old fellow, you must not be mean. We need a lot of things and they will not trust us at the grocery for our pretty faces. Keep quiet skin-flint, you stingy thing you!"

What with scolding and joking, they got two dollars more out of the Hebrew, so we had something "to wet our whistles."

My uncle's face was flaming red, and it seemed as though the blood would burst from his veins; if his tongue was thick, his eyes, on the other hand, gleamed more than ordinarily, and a beatific expression of material enjoyment was clearly marked upon his face.

I also felt the effects of the wine, for as it was adulterated, it kept rising to my nose; and this, together with the natural excitement of youth in the society of two girls—one a proud, and the other a saucy beauty;—but either capable of turning the head of an anchorite, and much more so of a student,—made me beside myself.

Nevertheless, it would not be fair to say that I was tipsy. I had made up my mind never to fall into the ignoble condition of a drunken man. I had often seen Botello completely fuddled, stumbling around, or falling on the floor like a block, or wild and beside himself; and I could never forget the shock it gave me, to see that handsome creature con-

verted into a beast, talking nonsense, or bellowing like a calf. Luis Portal, the man of the golden mean in self-indulgence, used to say :

“In jolly company, when there is some advantage in it, one may get a trifle elevated, but never drunk. On the contrary, you should keep cool, and try to enjoy yourself at the expense of the tipsy fellows.”

I followed this maxim, and was thus able to keep within bounds, not losing my head. I did foolish things, but knew that I was doing them, and rather enjoyed it.

The frolic was getting more obstreperous every moment. My uncle took out three dollars more ; Cinta went down several times, now to get wine, now a shrimp salad, now fruit and preserves. Finally, he bled again in order to have some coffee and liqueurs brought up. In short, there was got together at last an appetizing mixture of dinner and supper. The old woman must have feasted herself on the platter of rice and mussels, all alone out there in the kitchen, for that commonplace dish did not make its appearance.

We did not leave that diabolical den until after one o'clock. The mamma lighted us down the narrow, crooked stairs, with a kerosene lamp which gave out a ray of sickly light. When we reached the street, the first breath of fresh air aroused me as if from a dream. While we walked down Ancha Street, my uncle smacked his lips over the jolly time we had had.

"What do you think of the girls, eh? There are none of that kind in our part of the country. Which do you like the best? Belén, of course. She's just splendid. How lovely she is! I presume, of course, you are discreet, so mum's the word. There is no need of talking yonder about these fair ones we run across here; they are innocent creatures, and harm nobody. We must have a good time, my boy, for the very reason that I am about to become a sober, married man. It is well enough to go on a lark once in a while. And then, Belén and Cinta are not so exacting as many others; although, if they could, they would make me scatter money like dust all day long."

"Why didn't you give them one or two

bank-notes at first? It would have been better than to keep haggling over one dollar after another."

"Pshaw! Are you perchance some Russian prince? Such creatures, if one is free-handed with them, get so high and mighty you can't stand them. If I had shown them my pocket-book! I am even sorry that I carried it with me, because in such rollickings, one never can tell——"

He suddenly stopped, entirely recovered from the effects of the sherry, and pale and frightened, hastily thrust his hand into his pocket, crying:

"Why! my pocket-book! It is not here! Daggers and knives, it isn't, it isn't! Those thieves have stolen it. Three bills of a hundred each, at least. Thunder and Mars! It is not here, I tell you. Let's go and make them give it up."

"Search for it carefully," I murmured, with difficulty concealing my annoyance and disgust. "Search your pocket, they have not taken it, that's nonsense! I think your overcoat bulges out at the side, there."

He took a deep breath; the pocket-book was found. He felt of it joyfully, stopping under the light of a lamp-post to make sure that all the money was there. After he had searched the depths of his pocket-book, he recovered his good humor and said: "And, besides, it contained my Carmen's photograph. A nice fix I'd have been in, if they had stolen it. Belén would have been capable of digging out the eyes with a big pin."

He handed me the photograph, which was a small one, such a we give to those we love. I saw a youthful face, with a high, broad forehead, the hair dressed in a simple style, a pair of bright eyes with a gleam of passion and strength of will which surprised me—for I had pictured my uncle's sweetheart as mild and yielding, passively submitting to everything put upon her. Nor did I find her as plain as my mother had led me to expect. She had one of those faces, which, without being beautiful, attract your gaze the second time.

I left my uncle at the door of his hotel, and went to bed not far from daybreak.

I should never end if I were to tell how Por-

tal teased me the next day. He smelled of my clothes, and then smacked his lips, exclaiming:

“Aha! You’re a sly bird, you rogue! *Odor di femina!*” Suddenly he burst out laughing:

“Ho, ho! What’s all this!”

On the left leg of my trousers were stuck two little heads of angels, a rose, a bunch of lilies, and I know not what other properties. I had to make a clean breast of it, and give him a faithful and detailed description of the sweet-meat-box artists.

CHAPTER VI.

How glad I felt to start for Galicia! In Madrid the heat had become stifling, while at home one could enjoy the pure, fresh air, filled with the sweet fragrance of the country. It seemed as if I had never breathed before, and that my exhausted lungs required that moist, balmy, and pure air in order to perform their functions properly.

I am not one of those Galicians who feel homesickness very intensely, but, nevertheless, the first group of chestnuts which I recognized in the distance, appeared to me like a friend bidding me welcome home.

My mother was at Ullosa, so I went there at once, partly by stage and partly on foot, for one has to make use of all sorts of locomotion to get there. I arrived at sunset, and my mother came out into the road to meet me. With joined hands, and arm in arm, we walked over the space which separates Ullosa from the highway.

After she had wiped away the tears which invariably gather in a mother's eyes when she sees her son after a long absence, her first volley of questions was as follows: "So your uncle has hired a house, eh? Is it true that he has furnished it very handsomely? That's what a man does if he has money. They say that the bridal-bed is sumptuous. What rent does he pay? Something frightful, I presume, because everything is up to the sky in Madrid. And do you know whether he has yet secured a servant? It will be a wonder if he does not hire some horrid jade. That's the way the city council's funds fly off. That's why they do such mean things. Don't say that they don't, or you'll drive me wild, Salustio."

"But, my dear mother, what difference does it make to us?" I exclaimed, when I could get in a word edgewise. "How am I to blame because my uncle gets married?"

"Because you said it was all right," she replied, stopping to take breath, while her lips quivered like children's when their little troubles come upon them.

"You seem to think my uncle would be

guided by what I say. You must make the best of it, dear mother, and try to bear patiently what you can't help. I am sure that is the best way to act, on all accounts, even for our own advantage."

My mother fixed her eyes on me. She was two years older than Uncle Felipe, and had kept her good looks remarkably, thanks to her robust health, to the simple and healthful life she led, and perhaps also to her lack of serious thought and resulting intellectual weariness. She was as brisk as a bird, and her excitable and changeable disposition kept her from getting bilious, and whipped her blood into a more rapid circulation. Her moral fickleness, her inability to rise to the region of general and abstract ideas, allowed my mother to keep all her energy and ability for action. It was her strong will which guided her thoughts; and the predominance of the emotive and practical elements was revealed in her smooth, narrow brow, in the capricious play of her lips, and in the questioning, restless gaze of her ever-watchful eyes.

My mother never went to Pontevedra

except in cold weather, or in Holy Week, or at Easter to take communion. The Ullosa place was kept up the year round. With all her reviling of the Cardoso stock, my mother had much of the acquisitiveness, the sordid economy, and the mercantile spirit which characterize the Hebrew race. How much affection can do, and how it tangles up logic! Those traits which disgusted me in my uncle appeared like virtues in my mother, and really were so, if it is a virtue to make the best of circumstances. With a miserable four or five hundred, which was the most that could be got out of our property with the utmost squeezing, it was little short of a miracle to be able to live as she did with comparative comfort, pay no small part of the expenses of my education, and even hide away inside of a mattress five or six *onzas* for a rainy day. She who could succeed in doing this, was not an ordinary woman.

My mother always wore the Carmelite habit, to save expense for dresses, of course. She had linen woven from the flax raised on her land,—that strong, coarse, brown, Galician

linen, which never wears out,—and made shirts and sheets out of that. Out of a vineyard of sour grapes she made a little claret with which she would regale me during my vacations; from the rye raised in her fields, she made the bread she ate; a couple of pigs, fattened at home, kept her pot full all the year round; she raised chickens, to furnish her with eggs; she got her wood from a bit of a grove; she kept a cow, and sold it at the fair at a good profit when it no longer gave milk; other cattle she used to have in partnership with her tenants, making some small gains in that way; she distilled brandy from the grape-skins, and preserved plums in it,—in fact, she did everything possible to get the juice out of her money and her property, thus accomplishing those prodigies of good management and frugality, which a woman is only able to perform when she lives alone. Forced by her sex to confine her business undertakings within narrow limits, she made up for it by looking carefully after the smallest details, and not wasting the value of a pin. Healthy, high-spirited, indefatigable, she passed every

moment of the day in some useful occupation; and I even suspect that she sometimes did sewing or embroidery, in a secret way, for other people.

"I shall be as proud as a queen the day you finish learning your profession, and begin to earn money," she would say, when I used to express my amazement at seeing her so eager and so busy.

So I studied with greater zest, desiring to be able to make the last years of my mother's life easy and tranquil. But that was a mistaken idea; for, even if my mother were to have heaps of money, she would be just as active, given her temperament and disposition. She was so overflowing with life, and was so energetic and determined to get what she could out of the world, that far from inspiring compassion, she should have excited envy in those of us who dwell much within ourselves, and finally make of our imagination a prison cell.

My mother's disposition was of the kind that makes people happy and strong, and arms them against the friction and disappointments of life.

It was singular, but when I did not see my mother, I idealized her, and gave her credit for certain traits and weaknesses associated with her sex, which she was far from possessing. For example, I was strongly persuaded that she had passionate religious convictions, and sometimes I would respond to the profane jokes of my companions, or exclaim when I gave utterance to some audacious assertion: "Heaven grant that my mother may never know it." If I ate meat in Holy Week, or remembered how long a time had passed without my going to church, I would say to myself: "I hope my mother wont find it out." But the fact is that my mother, in spite of her Carmelite habit, attended to her church duties only perfunctorily, and never displayed any great concern for the welfare of my soul.

That is not to say that the high-spirited Galician woman had no positive beliefs. Doubtless my mother inherited from her Jewish ancestors the most deeply-rooted of her religious convictions, namely, that God was an angry, vindictive and implacable be-

ing—the God of the Old Testament who “visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation.” She believed naïvely that God does all this punishing unmercifully, right on the spot; and she also imagined that he was particularly disposed to pour out all the vials of his wrath upon those who troubled her, Benigna Unceta, for any cause or in any way. Thanks to her incapacity for general ideas, she concluded that the Deity was greatly interested in her personal wrongs and resentments. So much so, that when she stopped on the slope between us and Ullosa, quite out of breath with climbing and the vehemence of her anger, she exclaimed, in a prophetic tone:

“You’ll see how God will punish your Uncle Felipe in His own way. You’ll see. Just wait; he’ll not get off scot-free.”

I protested against this singular supposition, and, as though a heavenly voice from above joined with me in proclaiming mercy and charity, just then the *Angelus* sounded from the little church near by, with subdued melancholy and great poetic effect.

My mother turned abruptly and inquired :

“Are you going to the wedding?”

“Yes, indeed, and you ought to go also. It is scandalous that you should not go.”

“Don’t say anything to me, for I have no desire to be present at such a frightful scene. There never was, and never will be, such an absurd thing. Heaven grant that your uncle may not get an unfaithful wife! I wouldn’t wager a copper that he will not, though, marrying at his age! A nice thing it would be if I got married now!”

I battled against her invincible obstinacy asserting that my uncle was at a very good age to marry, and that we should appear ridiculous if we were to get angry at such a natural and proper procedure.

“That’s all bosh!” cried my mother, furiously. “A fine old mummy you are defending! I know what I say, and I also know what people tell me. God will square his accounts, though. Don’t imagine that I am crazy. Oh, no; but he’ll take a tumble, you’ll see! And the girl who marries him, I tell you, has no decency. I would not have your

uncle if he were covered with gold, and if he were not my brother, I'd——"

My mother gave me for my supper a country dish, which she knew I was very fond of—corn-meal fritters with new milk. She would take out the fritters sizzling hot, and let them get cool, and form a crust; then she would make a hole in the middle, and pour in there the richest of milk out of an earthenware pitcher. While I was dispatching this delicacy of Homeric simplicity, she talked and questioned me incessantly, and would always come back to the starting-point—my uncle. "He is now mixed up here in an affair, and I don't know how it will end. They are having a terrible row, and it seems to me that they'll settle him this time. It is another scrape, but much worse than that one about the lots and houses, though that was bad enough. The trouble now is in regard to the contract for the provision market; they say that your uncle goes shares in the profits with the contractor, and that they have allowed him fearful opportunities for extortion; but that, nevertheless, the man has not fulfilled a single part of

his contract, absolutely not one, so the municipal authorities are going to sue him. And they are not what they were last year, your uncle has no hold there. He'll have to go on a pilgrimage to the boss——if Don Vicente does not help him out of this scrape it'll be all up with him. But he'll help him; one is as bad as the other. By the power of Don Vicente's protection, they can do what they please in this province. As your uncle is to go to live in Madrid, they are going to hire his house in Pontevedra for the post-office——another fat thing for him! Nowadays, everybody has to be wide awake. A pretty state of things! I am not a man, but if I were, I'd go on a pilgrimage to the boss's house, like everybody else. I am saying this to you confidentially; but be careful what you say anywhere in public. Don Vicente has a crowd of dependents and powerful friends, and it would not do for him to take a dislike to you, because he may be useful to you some day."

On seeing her so demonstrative, I caught her by the waist and kissed her on the neck and cheeks, and took the occasion to say, laughingly,

“My dear mother, in order to present myself at Tejo with some show of propriety, I ought to take a wedding gift to the bride. My uncle may be as bad as you choose, and may have served us a thousand scurvy tricks, but anyway, he is now paying a good part of the cost of my education.”

“He doesn’t do it for nothing. Look here, my boy, if we were to claim what rightly belongs to us,—and who knows if he’ll keep on paying your expenses?”

“Why, that makes no difference, dear mother; that makes no difference. Even if he should not, I must have the present.”

“But I haven’t a single cent! Do you think I coin money here? Yes, much we are coining! It would cost me a pretty penny to do what you want.”

“Well,” said I, resolutely, “then there’s no need of talking any more about it. I’ll go to Pontevedra to-morrow, and pawn my watch or my boots, for a present there must be. I have made up my mind to that.”

The next morning my mother came into my room to awaken me. She had a basket of ripe

cherries which she left on my bed for me to eat; and in her hand were two little gleaming disks, which she held up to the height of my eyes. They were five dollar gold pieces.

“What do you think of that? I have had trouble enough to scrape this together. Now go and squander it; throw it away, since you are bound to. I don’t want you to say that your mother treats you badly, when she doesn’t need to, in any way whatever.”

I threw my arms around her neck, and gave her three or four hearty smacks, while she pretended to ward me off, exclaiming: “You clown, you schemer, go out to walk, little boy!”

With the ten dollars, I bought in the city a brooch with two crossed anchors and a little Cupid in the center, with a small ruby and two pearls. It was one of those senseless trinkets which fashion invents, but which good taste casts aside. But at least, now I was not going to the wedding empty-handed.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM Pontevedra to San Andrés de Louza, and thence to the country seat of Tejo, was a pleasant excursion rather than a journey. I crossed at the mouth of the river in a launch, which I hired in Pontevedra. Landing on the opposite bank, I resolved to go on foot for about a quarter of a league, through the most beautiful country one can imagine. From the beach, showing the footprints so clearly marked in the fine, silvery sand, and lined by great clumps of flowering aloes, to the footpaths overrun with honeysuckle, and the cornfields rustling in the breeze, it all seemed like an oasis; and my soul was filled with that vague joy which, when one is young, is born of the excitement of the senses, and with a sort of inexplicable presentiment, a messenger of the future—a presentiment, which without necessarily being a forerunner of happy days, yet excites us as though they really would follow.

As the country-seat of my uncle's prospective father-in-law was situated on high ground, I could see it from the very cove where I landed. To be more exact, all that I could see clearly was the square, turreted tower and the windows, stained red and gold by the setting sun. The rest of the building was hidden by a mass of verdure, probably a group of trees. Anyhow, I could see enough to guide me on my way. I left my valise in the village, saying that I would send after it on the following day, and went on.

I was ascending the sloping path, whipping with my cane the rustling corn and bushes, whence the startled butterflies flew; when, at a turn of the road, I was greatly surprised to see a man sitting on a rock. My surprise may seem strange at first, but the fact is the man was a friar. For the first time in my life I was looking at a friar in flesh and blood. I was astonished, as if I had thought that friars were no longer to be met with, except in the canvases of Zurbarán or Murillo.

All the knowledge I had of a friar's dress was derived from pictures I had seen in the

museum, or from having seen Rafael Calvo, once, in the Duke of Rivas's drama, *Don Alvaro*, or *The Force of Destiny*. I perceived that the friar seated on the rock was a Franciscan. His coarse gown fell in statuesque folds over his limbs, his hood had fallen on his shoulders, and in his hand was one of those coarse felt hats, with the brim looped up like a French abbé's, with which he was fanning his brow, wet with perspiration, breathing heavily all the time. Soon, putting his hat on the ground, turning his elbows out, and resting his open hands on his knees, he remained plunged in thought.

I observed him with eager curiosity, imagining that by the simple fact of his being a friar, his mind must be filled with strange or sublime thoughts.

He lifted his right hand, and thrusting it into his left sleeve, took out an enormous blue-and-white checked handkerchief from a kind of pocket formed in the folds of the sleeve, and blew his nose vigorously. Then he arose, took up his hat, and began to go on, just as I came up to him.

I did not know whether to come close to his side, or to fall back, or to pass on simply wishing him good afternoon. Without any known cause, that man attracted, interested and fascinated me. I had two antagonistic ideas about friars: on one side was the friar of the cheap chromos after Ortego—a gluttonous, drunken, dissolute creature, a man without any sense of decency looking out from under his cowl; on the other, was the friar of novels and poems,—gloomy, mystical, visionary, with his mind enfeebled by fasting, and his nerves shaken by abstinence; fleeing from womankind, avoiding men; dyspeptic, assaulted by temptations and scruples. And I was eager to know to which of the two classes my friar belonged.

As though he had read my thoughts, he stopped on hearing my footsteps, and faced me, while he said in a resolute and commanding tone:

“Good afternoon, sir. You’ll excuse me for asking you a question. Do you come from San Andrés de Louza, and are you going to the Aldao’s Tower?”

"Yes, sir, I am going there," I answered, somewhat surprised.

"Well, if you have no objection, we'll go along together. I know the way, because I have been there before. I take the liberty of making this proposition, as I imagine that whenever one finds himself traveling alone in the country, he is not offended—"

"Offense! Quite the contrary," I replied, pleased with the friar's martial air.

We went on side by side, because the path was widening and allowed us this privilege of sociability. I then noticed that he wore no shoes, but had on sandals which were fastened over the instep, thus leaving free his toes, which were fleshy and well-shaped like those of the statues of San Antonio of Padua. He at once began to question me.

"You must pardon me, for I am very frank, and like to have people know each other. Are you, perchance, a relative of Carmina Aldao?"

"No, sir, but of her betrothed. I am his nephew."

"Ah, I know now; the one who was study-

ing in Madrid to become a civil engineer; Benigna's son."

"Just so. How is it you know so much about me?"

"I'll tell you. The Aldao family honor me with many confidences, and that's the way I come to know so much about those details. And how do you get on with your studies? I know also that you are very assiduous, and have a brilliant future before you. And I am very glad to make your acquaintance. I say so sincerely, for I am not in the habit of paying compliments. But you don't know my name yet. I didn't tell you, because a poor friar does not need to introduce himself, as his habit is a sufficient introduction. My name is Silvestre Moreno, your humble servant."

"And my name is Salustio——"

"Yes, I know, I know. Salustio Meléndez Unceta."

"I see that you know everything."

"I wish I did," replied the friar, with a good-natured laugh; and then stopping suddenly, he said to me imploringly:

"Couldn't you do me the favor to give me a cigarette?"

"I don't smoke," I answered, with a certain hauteur, which afterward seemed absurd to me.

"You are quite right; one need the less. But I, oh, dear, I am so corrupted that—well, never mind, I must have patience till we get to Tejo."

"How long is it since you have smoked?"

"Heigh, ho, since yesterday afternoon. I have been staying at the house of an old lady in Pontevedra, who is a very respectable widow and lives there all alone. And you can well understand that neither she nor her maid smoke. I cut myself, when I was shaving in the morning, as I had a saw instead of a razor, and that lady was so kind, that she bought me a little English razor, fine enough to cut a thought; here it is," he added, pointing up his sleeve. "I haven't used it yet. So you see, after that present, which must have cost her considerable, I couldn't be mean enough to ask her for money for tobacco."

"But," cried I, infected by the friar's frank-

ness, "don't you carry a copper of your own?"

"Why, to be sure I do not, most of the time, nor half of one."

"How is that possible?"

"Why, good gracious, my vow of poverty—is that only a joke?"

"I am very sorry I don't smoke," I exclaimed, "if only for this once."

"Don't distress yourself, friend, for we friars don't mind it when we cannot indulge a bad habit. Besides, when I get to Tejo I'll have more good things than I want. You'll see how Señor Aldao will rush forward to offer me a cigar."

He said this with a cheerful and philosophical air, and proceeded on his way in good spirits, walking faster than I could. A question kept springing to my lips, and I finally ventured to put it, "Doesn't it mortify you to go without shoes?"

"No, sir," he replied, slowly, as though trying to recollect whether it really did annoy him. "I did miss my shoes at first, or rather, not them, but my stockings, because I never

wore any but those which my mother used to knit for me, and they were very heavy. Oh, I am mistaken ; I have worn stockings, and that of the finest silk, not so very long ago. I say this, that you may not fancy, because I am a friar, that I have never enjoyed such luxuries. However, that is foreign to our subject. But in regard to your question, which I wish to answer categorically, you must know that since I have been going around without shoes, I have never suffered with corns, chilblains, bunions, or anything of the kind."

As he spoke, he thrust out his foot, which was really well-shaped, and had none of the deformities caused by wearing shoes.

"And just observe, sir, what habit will do. It seems to me now that I am cleaner this way. I have come to think that shoes and stockings serve only to hide nastiness. No one who goes without shoes has really dirty feet, no matter how much he may walk or how hot it may be ; especially if he has the habit I have"—suited the action to the word, he drew aside a few steps, and approaching the little brook which flowed by the side of the path-

way, between reeds and briers, took off his sandals, tucked up his gown a little, and thrust first one foot and then the other into the flowing stream. After he had dried them on the grass, he put on his sandals, and looked at me with a triumphant air. I smiled under the impulse of an idea, or, rather, a very warm feeling, which might be expressed in these words:

“What a queer friar, and how nice he is!”

“Come now, I can guess what you are thinking about,” said he.

“Perhaps you can. Go on, and I’ll tell you if you are right.”

“Well, then, you are thinking under your coat, there, that we friars pay little attention to our manners, that we are very democratic, and don’t understand the ways of society; and, besides, that we are very crafty in our dealings with people.”

“No, indeed, sir, by no means! I was thinking——”

“Call me Father Moreno, or simply, Moreno, if it is the same to you. That ‘sir’ sounds too formal for a poor friar.”

"Well, Father Moreno, what I was puzzling over—but there, I am afraid if I tell you I shall offend you."

"By no means, by no means. I like frankness."

"Well, I was thinking that friars do not generally have the reputation of being so—so much devoted to bodily cleanliness as you are."

While saying this, I was looking at him out of the corner of my eye, examining his hands, his ears, his neck; all which outwardly betray a person's habits of cleanliness.

"I even thought you considered it sinful to care for the person. They say that the chief merit of some ascetic saints consisted in their carrying a thousand inhabitants on their persons; and having their hair and beards—colonized!"

Instead of getting angry at my impertinence, the friar burst into the heartiest laugh I ever heard in a man's mouth.

"So that's what you thought," he said, when his mirth would allow him to speak. "And you, who appear to be so well informed a

young fellow, don't you know what the glorious St. Teresa used to say? Why, she would bathe herself thoroughly, and then exclaim, 'Lord, make my soul like my body!' So you thought that all we friars were stupid pigs! No wonder you felt startled when you met me! Have you ever met any friars except your humble servant?"

"To tell the truth, you are the first I ever met in my life. Furthermore, I thought you no longer existed. Of course, it was nonsense; for I know that they are re-peopling the convents of various orders in Spain. But, honestly, I had the fancy that friars were only to be found in paintings, in the figures in churches, and, consequently—but it was all a mistake, of course."

"Well, here you see a live one. It is the same with friars as with the rest of the world, and you will readily understand that there are many different tastes and dispositions, though all are governed by the same rule. Some are careless, while others pay more attention to dress. But, as you are aware, our sacred garb does not allow us to carry about many per-

fumery bottles, or an array of essences and pomades. How nice a friar would look using Fay's wash, or *Kananga*—or what the deuce do they call that perfume which is so much the rage just now?"

"I see that you know all about it, Father," I exclaimed, laughing in my turn.

"It is because I am often with some very stylish and elegant ladies. Don't feel surprised that I desire to clear myself, and all poor little friars, of the bad reputation you give us. Just fancy, our Holy Founder was so fond of water that he even composed some fine verses proclaiming it pure and clean! I speak to you with entire frankness; I do like neat people, but I don't like excessive care of the person. That seems to me sickening and disgusting. Goodness! This wasting a half hour by a young fellow in trimming and polishing his nails—that may pass in a woman,—but for a man who wears a beard—bah!"

As he said this, the friar folded his arms, and turned toward me, as if tired and wanting to rest.

In the reddish light of the setting sun which so clearly defines the form, I could see

that his was in perfect harmony with that profession of manly faith. He was robust, without being stout, and of good height, without being very tall. His dark, olive complexion indicated a bilious temperament, and his skin was bronzed by journeying exposed to the blazing sun. His very black eyes were quick, lively, and well-shaped; with a piercing look which seemed to search the very depths of your soul. His neck, left uncovered by his tonsure, indicated strength; and so did his hands, large, strong, and flexible—hands which might serve alike gently to elevate the Host, or to use the spade, the cudgel, or the musket, in case of need. His features did not belie his hands, and were drawn as though by a skilled sculptor; uniting that calmness and firmness to be seen in certain statues. On his upper lip and in the middle of his chin he had two dimples, which almost always indicate a kindly heart, destined to modify a naturally severe disposition. I even noticed his ears, which were wide and almost flexible, like a confessor's—ears with a great deal of character, such as ecclesiastics usually have.

"What a friar he is! What a vigorous nature he seems to have!" I kept thinking in surprise.

We held on our way. We must now have been quite near to the Aldao place, but we could not reach it until nightfall, which was rapidly approaching. The fragrance of the honeysuckle was more penetrating; the dogs thrust their noses through the fences, and barked at us with the greatest fury; far away you could hear the owls hooting; and the new moon, like a fine line traced in the sky, showed itself over the river. The friar uttered a slight exclamation, thus proving that he appreciated the beauty of the scene.

"What a lovely afternoon! Ah! but this is a beautiful country! The more you see it, the more you admire it. And how cool it is! Too much so for me. For my part, I prefer the climate of Africa."

"Have you been much in Africa?"

"I should say so! Why, I am half Moor."

"And have you journeyed over the desert?"

"Certainly; and without any tents, or store of provisions, or escort, or any other traps,

such as explorers usually carry. I traveled around mounted on a mule, with a couple of hens tied to the pommel of my saddle; drinking water from the pools; and sleeping under the wide canopy of the stars. Thus I have wandered far over those sandy wastes, and had many an adventure."

I should have liked to question him about his African travels, but just then I was pricked on by a greater curiosity, as we drew near to Tejo and could see its white walls and a great black blotch of trees, as it seemed to me. I wanted to test the exactness of my mother's information by finding the opinion of a person whom I already believed to be extremely impartial and straightforward.

"Tell me, Father Moreno, are you acquainted with the family into which my uncle is to marry? What sort of a person is his betrothed? What kind of a man is her father?"

"Of course, I know them," replied the friar, putting, as it were, a mask of discreet reserve over his frank face. "They are a very nice family, and your uncle's betrothed is—a very good young lady, indeed."

“And—is she pretty?”

The friar was not shocked by my question, but answered freely :

“I am but a poor judge of that. Perhaps I may be mistaken, but I will confess that she does not appear to me to be ravishingly beautiful. I would not call her ugly, but neither—Although I say I’m a poor judge, yet it is not because I have not had an opportunity of seeing women; for, over there in Tangiers, Tetuán, and Melilla, there are Jewish and Moorish women who are considered very beautiful. You’ll be surprised, but I have some Moorish friends who thought so much of me that one of them showed me his harem. Among those people it was a great mark of esteem, I tell you.”

“Ah,” I murmured, unable to keep back a mischievous remark. “So the door of the harem was opened to you?”

“Yes,” replied the friar, with great simplicity; “and do you want to hear a description of my friend’s favorite, the chosen one, I say, of this Moorish friend of mine, who was a very wealthy man in that place?”

“How did she look? Very enticing?”

“I have already told you that I am but a poor judge, and can only describe her outward appearance; and you may decide for yourself. She wore a rich silk dress, cut low in the neck, which was covered with diamond necklaces and strings of big pearls. She had on at least two or three. She wore large gold bands on her arms, like those described by Cervantes in his novel *El Cautivo*. Haven't you read it? Well, that was the kind. Then there were cushions and cushions and more cushions; some under her arms, others under her hips, and others behind her head. Their purpose was to prevent her chafing herself, for she was almost bursting with fat, which is the secret of beauty among Moorish women. This one could not stir. Do you know how they used to fatten her? Why, with little bread balls, and in such numbers that it could no longer be called fattening a woman, but cramming her. She was smoking through a tube as long as this, and in front of her she had a little table inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which was covered with sweetmeats and various drinks.”

“Ah, you old rogue of a friar!” I thought. “You pretend to be very simple and innocent, though you are really the greatest and most crafty rogue in the world. You are boring me with all this gossip about the Moors so as not to drop anything about my prospective aunt. But I’ll catch you yet! Just wait!” So I said aloud:

“Father Moreno, as you can describe a Moorish woman so well, you can surely draw the likeness of a Christian woman. At least, you might inform me whether my uncle’s betrothed is stuffed with bread balls, or if she has a slender and graceful figure, like the palm-tree of the desert. Come, Father!”

We were ascending the stony path which runs along the inclosure of Tejo, and there we could not walk side by side. So the friar turned around and faced me, in order to reply. The last rays of the sun had disappeared, but in the twilight I could see his eyes gleam, while he answered me with a strange mixture of sportive grace and earnestness:

“Sir, pardon, I pray you, a poor friar for expressing himself in a manner conformable

to the habit he wears, and to the rule he obeys. I may describe the person of a Moorish woman, a heathen, because, if God has made it beautiful, it is the only thing we can praise about her; since her soul is wrapped in the darkness of error. But you, yourself, have called your uncle's betrothed a Christian woman; and I, for my part, am fully persuaded that she is worthy of that name; so—pardon me, if I express myself with too much warmth—I was going to say, that name so sublime. A Christian woman's soul is the first, and perhaps the only thing about her worthy of praise, and any other eulogies would not sound well, coming from my lips. A body which incloses a soul, redeemed by the blood of Christ! Ah! I am not going to praise her to you with pretty words, or flowers of rhetoric. If I assure you that your future aunt is indeed a Christian woman, I have said all that I have to say."

"Is she so very good, Father Moreno?"

"Excellent, excellent, excellent!"

The tone in which the friar repeated this adjective, left no room for further urging.

Besides, we had reached the gate. Nevertheless, when the father seized the knocker, I could not refrain from asking, in an insinuating tone:

“And do you come to the wedding out of pure friendship, Father Moreno?”

“Oranges!” he exclaimed, in the harsh tone which usually emphasizes the most innocent expletives; “Why, I have come to perform the ceremony!”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ponderous gate swung open, and we found ourselves in a court filled with shrubs and creepers, which climbed all over the front of the villa, almost concealing its architecture. The vines and shrubs were covered with blossoms, and gave out a delightful fragrance—that divine perfume, beyond the reach of the chemist's art, which can be distilled nowhere but in the mysterious laboratory of Nature.

Seated on stone benches and rustic iron chairs, enjoying the moonlight, were several persons who rose as we entered and came forward to welcome Father Moreno with joyful exclamations. They noticed no one but him at first, and that gave me time to study them attentively. My uncle was foremost, dressed in a white duck suit, and by his side was a young lady of medium height, of light and elegant figure, who uttered a cry of joy on seeing the father. On the left was a man

pretty well advanced in years, bald and with a mustache—the father-in-law. Behind him stood a very young, little priest, almost a boy; and near him a tall girl of about sixteen years, and a little girl who could not have been more than twelve.

They all gathered around the father, bidding him welcome with a confusion of voices. At last they remembered that I was in existence, and my uncle introduced me:

“Señor de Aldao, this is Benigna’s son, my nephew,—Carmina, this is Salustio.”

My future auntie looked at me abstractedly. All her attention was absorbed by the father. Nevertheless, after a little while she turned toward me, and asked whether my mother would come, for she much desired to see her. I made excuses for my mother’s absence as well as I could, and Señorita Aldao returned to her attentions to the friar. “Wouldn’t you like some water, orangeade, ale, sherry wine? A glass of milk? A sip of chocolate?”

“My child!” cried the father, pushing her back familiarly, as one would brush away a fly, “If you want to give me something I

would wish,—good gracious, give me half a cigarette, although it were of straw!”

In the twinkling of an eye two cigar-cases flew open, and Señor Aldao and my uncle offered him their cigars, and several matches were immediately lighted. My uncle's Havana cigar was given the preference.

“You may well enjoy smoking it,” said he, for he was fond of praising what he gave away. “It came from no one less than Don Vicente Sotopeña.”

“Ah, of course he wouldn't have any but the very best—plague on him!”

“Sit down, sit down and smoke,” they all besought him.

Seated at last, with the cigar between his lips, he proceeded to answer the questions of each and every individual. They wanted to know when he had left Compostela, and how were the other friars, and what was going on there.

I sat a little apart from the rest, overcome by a singular feeling of abstraction, a sort of mental intoxication. Reclining on a bench, I perceived that at my back the branches of a

magnificent creeper were spread like green silk tapestry. It was the *Datura*, or "Trumpet of the Day of Judgment"; and it did not require a very vivid imagination to compare its gigantic white blossoms to cups full of exquisite perfume. A double jasmine, entwined with the *Datura*, stretched itself along the wall. Those pleasant odors, set astir by the light breeze, mounted to my brain and quickened my young blood, inspiring me with an eager longing for love,—an ethereal, pure, and deep love—an absorbing passion, ready to defy all laws, both human and divine. When we make a change of abode,—even though our fortune may not be altered,—when we enter a circle of unknown people, our imagination and self-love become excited, and those to whom we were totally indifferent yesterday, suddenly become of interest to us, and we feel anxious in regard to the opinion they may form of us, and to the feelings with which we inspire them.

The government official, the army officer, who is sent to a distant post, has a vague idea of the place where he is going to reside. But scarcely has he set foot in it, when the past is

blotted out, and the present rules over him with the great power of the actual, and the stimulus of the novel and unknown.

In that way, excited by my new horizon, though somewhat mortified in the bottom of my heart because they paid no attention whatever to me, I imagined that those people, barely seen for the first time, strangers to me a few moments before, would yet have some decisive influence on my heart or fortune. I began by imagining that in the bosom of that family, so peacefully gathered together enjoying the moonlight, a very strange moral drama was being unfolded, of which the friar undoubtedly knew the mystery.

There are everywhere dramas behind the scenes, and secret histories, I reflected, with my brain intoxicated by the delightful fragrance of the jasmine. At Josefa Urrutia's house there in Madrid the drama has a grotesque form, but is none the less real. A famous farce might be made of Botello's life and fortunes. If there is anything going on here, Father Moreno must know all about it. Why does this young lady, remarkable as she seems,

marry my disagreeable uncle? Is it true that they treat her badly? No, for my mother herself, when I pressed her, confessed that that was a rumor without the slightest foundation. And these little girls I see here, what rôles do they take? And Señor Aldao's mistress, where is she? And that engaged couple, sitting in a spot so fitted to stir the senses and the imagination, are they in love with each other? And if they are not, why do they get married?

I was suddenly aroused from these reveries by the young priest, who approaching me said in a boyish voice and an unpleasant Galician accent:

"Pardon my curiosity, but are you Doña Benigna's son?"

"Yes, I am."

"The one who is studying to be an electric, magnetic scientist?"

At first I did not understand his poor attempt at wit, so he added:

"Who is studying to be an ingenious,—I mean, an engineer."

"Ah, yes."

"Well, I am glad to meet you. Do you want anything? Do you feel tired? Do you smoke?"

"And are you the parish priest at San Andrés de Louza?" I inquired, just to say something.

With the most unwarrantable familiarity the little priest put his hand on my head, and, forcing me to bow it till it touched my knees, he shrilled:

"Come down, come down, your Excellency, for I am not up so high as that. Parish priest! Oh, if you had called me one of the clergy, *contentaverit mihi*. I am still an apprentice, or, in other words, a raw recruit in the sacred militia."

He sat down by me, and began to talk to me in the most nonsensical fashion, though I scarcely paid him any attention, because, in truth, my thoughts were quite otherwise engaged. Meanwhile the hour was approaching when the heavy dew, and the dampness which impregnates the air, makes it unpleasant in Galicia to remain out of doors. Our host arose and had us enter and go up to a little

parlor, adorned with cretonne hangings; thence we passed into the spacious dining-room, where the supper was served by two attendants; one with the appearance of a rough country lout, the other somewhat more polished, both being under the direction of a fat old woman, who shuffled her feet as she walked, and who, in spite of the decay into which her attractions had fallen, I fancied must be Señor Aldao's ex-mistress. The two girls that I had met in the court had vanished, and did not make their appearance either at the table or in the parlor.

I was seated opposite my uncle's betrothed, and the lamp shone full on her face, so that I could satisfy my curiosity by gazing at her—fairly devouring her face, in fact. I at once acknowledged to myself that Father Moreno was right; she was neither beautiful nor plain. Her lithe, graceful figure was finer than her face; the latter having a somewhat sharp profile, and lacking the clear complexion and regular features which are the primary elements of beauty. But after a brief study, I came to the conclusion that if she was

not handsome, she was at least very fascinating.

When she opened her black eyes, with their animated expression; when she smiled; when she turned in answer to some question, her mobile face became expressive, life flashed through all those features which I had imagined to be always cold and in repose, in spite of my having already seen in her photograph, by the light of the street lamp in Madrid, some indefinable revelation of spirit.

Carmina Aldao laughed but seldom, and yet she did not appear to be melancholy. Her animation was that of the will. She even seemed demonstrative in the extreme when I gave her my little offering after supper, and praised the poor trinket in the most enthusiastic manner.

"What good taste! Look here, papa, Felipe! How cunning it is! And did you choose it yourself? Just think of it, a student! Ah, it is clear that you can be intrusted with commissions. Why, it is beautiful!"

Father Moreno also put in his oar, saying:

"I declare it is beautiful, indeed. That's what rich people can do, but we poor friars do not dare to be so extravagant. Our gifts are more simple—"

As he spoke, he went off in search of his traveling bag, his only luggage, which a boy had brought from San Andrés de Louza; and produced from its depths a pearl crucifix of the kind they bring from Jerusalem, which, though of modern make, shows the body of the Lord carved with a certain Byzantine stiffness. It was half a yard long.

"It is all that I can give you, my daughter," he said. "This crucifix has touched the Stone of Golgotha, where our Lord's cross was erected."

The young girl did not reply, but with a rapid movement she bent over and kissed either the crucifix or the hand which offered it to her, I do not know which.

The friar went on bringing out from his bag a variety of rosaries, some of pearl, others of black olive-pits strung on a cord and not yet clasped into a circle. "These come from the olive-trees on the Mount of Olives," he ex-

plained, while he separated and distributed them among those who were present. When it came to my turn, I must have made a movement of surprise, for the friar said, with stately courtesy :

“Don’t you want it? You must take things, remembering from whom they come; we are poor by vocation, so we cannot offer gifts of more material value, Sir Salustio.”

I took the rosary, somewhat embarrassed by the lesson he gave me. Meanwhile some people had arrived from San Andrés to help pass the evening pleasantly, and make up a game at cards: the parish priest, the druggist, and an adjutant of the Marines. They offered me the fourth seat at the table, but I refused, as I feared I might lose, and find myself without money in a stranger’s house. My uncle sat down by his sweetheart and began to talk to her. Father Moreno went off to read his breviary, and I was again left to the tender mercies of the clerical apprentice.

“Where is my room?” I inquired. “Do you know? I should like to go to bed.”

“I don’t know,” he said; “but he who has

a tongue—goes to Rome. Come on, take hold of my little finger.”

We went through the dining-room. The lamp was still lit, and the old woman was overlooking the operation of taking off the table-cloth, gathering up the glasses and plates, and putting away the dessert. I again fixed my attention on the retired sultana. She certainly must have been good-looking in former times, but now her scanty gray locks, her skin blotched with erysipelas, together with her great obesity, rendered her abominable. She appeared to be industrious, fond of scolding, but at the same time quite humble, and resigned to her life below stairs.

The little priest, preparatory to asking her a question, squeezed her right arm.

“Oh, Serafín, be quiet. What impudent tricks you do play! My, what a fellow!”

“*Mulier*, one can pinch you without danger; for you are at least proof against all temptation. Where is the *cubiculo*, or, in other words, bed-room of this young gentleman?”

“Right next to yours. May the Lord give the unlucky man patience to stand you so

near! Candidiña, Candidiña, bring a light, and show these gentlemen their way."

The tall maid before-mentioned appeared, candle in hand. She had a fair light complexion, innocent and even slightly stupid features,—which somewhat resembled a wooden cherub's; but her little eyes were speaking and mischievous, and she lowered them so that they should not betray her. She went on ahead, and we followed her up a steep staircase. She led us to our rooms up in the tower, which were separated from each other by a narrow hall. These rooms had not been made over, when Señor Aldao had the tower reconstructed, and were very old. Probably they were ordinarily used for storing chestnuts or squashes. The furniture consisted only of a bed, two chairs, a small table, and a wash-stand.

The girl left the candle on the table and said:

"That's Serafín's room, and this is yours. They are plenty large enough."

"Even enough for you, too," said the clerical apprentice, in a most impudent manner.

The girl winked and laughed aloud, while she waved her hand threateningly at Serafín ; but immediately afterward she turned toward me and, assuming a most modest demeanor, asked, in a humble tone, whether I had any orders to give her. I said I should like to have some writing materials, and she replied that she would run and get them at once. As she carried off the candle, I was left almost in the dark, and could only see by the reflection of the moon. I went up to the window, and beheld, close by, a vast, dark mass stretching itself out ; a sort of vegetable lake, which resembled a single tree—although I doubted it could be, on account of its size. Afar off, the river gleamed like a gray satin robe, dotted with silver spangles ; the crescent moon was multiplied in its bosom, and the imperceptible sound of the lapping of the waves against the beach mingled with the soft night breeze, which shook the branches near by.

A cool, moist breeze caressed my cheeks. Candidiña interrupted my meditation, stealing in without knocking at the door. She brought

in one hand an inkstand, almost running over; and in the other, besides the candle, paper, envelopes, a stub of a pen, and a cornucopia filled with sand.

“Aunt Andrea says that you must excuse us for having everything so topsy-turvy. She says that to-morrow, without fail, she will give you the sand-box. She says that in the country one must overlook a great deal.”

I began to gather things together preparatory to writing to Luis Portal, but the girl, instead of going off, remained standing there, gazing at me as if my person and my actions were matters of great curiosity. When she peeped over my shoulders to see how I arranged my paper, she said, with almost childish surprise, and with the sweet accent peculiar to the people who live on the seashore of Galicia:

“Oh, are you going to write to-night, when it is so late?”

A capricious fancy flashed through my imagination, a thrill ran along my veins, which I repressed with the comparative effort needed to subject purely physical impulses.

"Be a little careful, Salustio. You are excited to-day. Go very slowly."

Then, in order to say something to the girl, I asked:

"Is that a single tree I see from the window?"

"Why, don't you know it is the Tejo (the yew-tree)?"

"A single yew cover that immense space! Santa Bárbara! It must be at least half a league in circumference."

"Half a league! How absurd! Don't exaggerate so. It is not half a league from this place to San Andrés. But I tell you it is three stories high."

"Three stories in a tree!"

"Oh, it's so, you'll see! One is the ball-room, the other is where they take coffee, and from the third you can see a great deal of land—and the river, and everything."

CHAPTER IX.

FAC-SIMILE of my letter to Luis Portal:

MY DEAR BOY:

Here I am at your orders at Tejo, the country-seat of the father of my uncle's lady-love—confound him! called so, not my uncle, but the country-seat, on account of a colossal yew-tree, which, according to what they say, is three stories high, as high as the finest house in Orense.

I have just arrived here, so I can't tell you yet what I think about the bride and the people here, to wit: her father, an old woman who had some connection with the father in former times, and two daughters or nieces of the old woman; one well grown, and although she is called Cándida—well, the least said about that the better. My future auntie is a young lady of graceful bearing, with a pleasant face, if you examine it attentively. She has pretty eyes, very pretty, indeed. I know not whether she is in love, but she displays considerable affection for my uncle,—well, old chap, I come back to my old subject. Can you believe that a decent and high-minded woman—and they say that my auntie is such—can marry such a man just for the sake of marrying? Does not her

little heart conceal some secret experience? Or can it be that, by reason of her own innocence, she imagines that to marry a man is only like taking his arm for a promenade?

The thing fills my mind, because in a very short time I have formed a private opinion in regard to Carmiña Aldao, due to the information I have received from a friar. Don't you know, my boy? I have journeyed with a veritable friar, a Franciscan, barefooted and all that. And he praised my auntie up to the sky, saying that she is a model of a Christian woman. This is singular, indeed, coming from a friar. If you could see what a curious type this Father Moreno is! He is one of the most unaffected, simple, frank, and fascinating beings the Lord ever created! He amazes me. Nothing startles him nor is he bigoted; he does not avoid talking upon any subject which may be alluded to in good society, nor does he treat one disdainfully, or fall into any pious foolishness; nor does he do anything that does not seem cordial, discreet, and fitting. You must not think, by what I am saying, that the friar is taking me in; that's not so easily done. On the contrary, I am dreadfully stirred up by his gift of fascinating everybody around him, including myself. I will watch him; and I am of little use, if I don't unmask him yet. What does the rogue mean? To make himself able to win more proselytes? There's no doubt about it, with his charming disposition and manners he secures and exerts great influence. Is it possible that he is concealing other schemes

not in accordance with his garb? For he is either a saint or a hypocrite, although quite different from any ordinary hypocrite. Do you believe, my boy, that a man can live that way, surrounded by breakers and quicksands, without running upon them? One must admit that his vow of perpetual poverty is no pretense, for I have found out that he does not even carry enough money to buy a pipe; likewise his vow of obedience, though soldiers also obey their superior officers; but as for his vow of chastity—well, if he keeps that—don't you think that's rather fishy, my boy?

As you can fancy, my uncle is as deeply in love as is possible for him. To tell the truth, his sweetheart seems to be a great catch for him. Perhaps Señor Aldao has not much money, because they say he likes display and that his country-seat eats up his cash; also, that his married son bleeds him freely. But with all that, I think that my uncle has more than he could have hoped for.

The wedding will take place soon, on the day of Our Lady of Carmen. My uncle sleeps at the druggist's in San Andrés; but I, not being the lover, am entertained at Tejo, I will tell you what goes on here.

Write to me, old chap, you lazy fellow. I presume you go on chewing your old cud of opportunism and compromise with everybody, even the devil himself.

You are a great rogue!—I forgot, tear this up at once,—but you are so prudent you were sure to have done so without my asking it.

I had finished, and, luckily, had just sealed up my letter, when the little clerical apprentice entered my room unceremoniously. If it were not for circumstances which will appear in due time, I would not describe so minutely the appearance of that priest in embryo; but it will be a help to say that he had a sort of rat's snout, a small mouth without lips, which displayed his decayed and irregular teeth when he smiled; that he had a small hooked nose, eyes drawn up toward his brain, which could hardly have been larger than a sparrow's; a white face spotted with large freckles; and that he was beardless, while his hair, eyelashes, and eyebrows were red. I was in doubt whether he was a simpleton or a puppy. At the same time he was something like a forward child, which prevented any one from taking his words or actions seriously.

"Bathe?" he asked, addressing me impersonally as he was wont to do.

"Do I bathe?"

"Do you bathe in the ocean, sir,—in San Andrés? I ask because I go down to the beach every day, and might accompany you."

“Very well; we’ll take a dip.”

“I thought it would please you, that about the sea-baths. Your uncle also takes a dip every morning. He does it like a cod-fish; but he does not seem to get any cleaner for all that. He, he!”

“The worst of it is, I have no bathing-suit.”

“Nor I, neither. But if you are so squeamish—all you have to do is to go to some corner behind a rock.”

“What?”

“Or put on an extra pair of drawers.”

“Well, that might do.”

Meanwhile, the little priest, or acolyte as he might better be called, leaned back in his chair as though he were going to stay all night. I saw that it was necessary to use no ceremony with him, so I undressed rapidly and got into bed.

“Are you sleepy?” asked Serafín, approaching the bed, and with the greatest familiarity pinching my shoulder and patting my cheeks. I screamed, and instinctively struck him a hard blow, which made him burst out laughing convulsively. Then he tried to find out,

by experiment, whether I was ticklish ; or if I was in love—for that purpose cruelly squeezing my little finger.

That strange familiarity, more suitable to a child of six years than to a man, and especially a man who aspired to the priesthood, inspired me with a ludicrous contempt for him ; though, at the same time, with a certain tolerance for his faults ; and I threatened to throw my boot at him, if he did not keep quiet. That threat took effect ; Serafín sobered down, and, throwing himself like a lap-dog across the foot of my bed, he said that he was not sleepy and that he wanted to talk to me.

I told him that he might go on, and never was a programme more faithfully carried out to the very letter. A flood of ridiculous nonsense rushed from that mouth ; laughable simplicities mixed with bits of theological learning, and fragments of coarse wit, so pointed at times, that I was amazed, and quite unable to solve the problem whether that individual were a born idiot or a tremendous rogue.

“ So you come from Madrid. Ah, how de-

lightful Madrid must be ! I have never been there. Have no cash for the railroad. Cash ! I wish I might see some ! Well, Serafín, my boy, when it rains dollars you'll get some. And are the streets in Madrid like—those—of Pontevedra ? I suppose the pavements are of marble. Well, the people there go off to the other world, either raging or singing, don't they ? Well, then I do not envy the people in Madrid a bit. All are equal in the presence of death, sir. And you, what are you studying for ? To be one of those who make viaducts, railroads, and tunnels ? Ah, then we'll have to call you Your Excellency ! You'll be a Minister, and you'll make me an electoral canon,—I mean lectoral. Still, I would make a better penitentiary canon, because I am awfully penitent. And you, even if you come to be more of an engineer than the very one who invented engineering, you'll not get ahead like your uncle. Get on ! Ah, your uncle knows how ; he is a crafty one. Nobody can get the cream out of Don Vicente Sotopaña as he does. That business of the lots was a good slice, and now they are going to hire his

house for the post-office, and pay him a million dollars rent. Afterward, when they have elections, they'll come to soft-soap us priests. But as a friend of mine, a priest, said to me: Gee-up, there, *vade retro, exorciso te*, for liberalism is sin, and if anybody doubts it I will thrust under his nose the fundamental doctrine of *de fide*, expounded by the Holy Vatican Council. Our palates here are not spoiled by mongrel sauces. Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what do you think about politics?" I inquired.

"About politics? Noble breasts can hold but one opinion."

"Let's hear what opinions noble breasts hold."

"Well, I will tell you through the lips of one who knew what he was talking about: *Nequit idem simul esse et non esse*. Do you want it any clearer? I am not an advocate of *Iglesia liebre en el Estado galgo* (a church like a hare in a state like a grey-hound). *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*."

"Do speak Christian; or, at least, Galician. Are you a good-for-nothing Carlist?"

“*Ego sum qui sum*; that is to say: Look out for mixtures, discriminations, and jobs. I told your Uncle Felipe so very plainly, and Don Román Aldao, also, who is a great braggart, and who is sighing for the title of Marquis of Tejo, or at least for the grand cross. They say that his son-in-law will bring it to him as a wedding present. *Vanitas vanitatis!* Ha! ha! Carmen’s brother also wants some pap; he wants a fat post in the administration of the hospital—I believe that poultices fatten one like everything.”

“Hush, you turn my stomach!”

“He’ll not get it, for his brother-in-law dislikes him. He’ll not be able to make porridge with linseed flour, nor to put wooden chickens, just for show, in the stews made for the poor sick people. Uncle Felipe is a good one! He’ll do. He has no delicacy, not a bit! Although he is going to get married, he still runs after Candidiña out in the garden. Don’t you believe it? She is no fool, either! She already knows more than many old women. *Ne attendas fallaciæ mulieris.*”

“Don’t slander my uncle, you prurient little

creature," I exclaimed, with my curiosity excited, because I fancied that the simpleton sometimes hit the nail on the head. "Do you think he would run after girls in the very sight of his lady-love?"

"Yes, yes, you may be sure of it. If you could see some other old men, who can hardly get around any longer, run after the little monkey! *Vinum et mulieris apostatare faciunt sapientes*, as has been said. Cándida leads them on; and don't imagine she does it just to pass the time. She knows when to throw the hook. Carmiña will find a stepmother starting out from behind a cabbage."

I started up in surprise.

"But, that Candidiña, is she not,—is she not a daughter of—"

The little acolyte gave a shriek.

"Ha, ha, ha! he thought that—" (he made the gesture of joining the tips of his forefingers). "No, man, no! Neither Cándida nor the other girl are figs from Doña Andrea's fig-tree. They are her nieces—I knew their father, who was a general, I mean a corporal of the coast guard. The old woman took

charge of them because their parents died. And, by my faith, remember that Serafín Espiña assures you of it, the witch does not run after love affairs out of *concupiscentia carnis*. She wants to drag a silk train after her. If we live, we are bound to see miracles.”

CHAPTER X.

WE took a sea-bath the following morning; we walked about in San Andrés, feeling our importance, for our presence was an event in the little village; we visited the parochial church; we gathered shells on the beach; and yet were back at Tejo at nine o'clock, ready for our chocolate. Father Moreno did not accompany us; he preferred to take his bath in the afternoon, because he did not like to omit his mass. My uncle had not yet made his appearance, nor would he come until one o'clock in the afternoon, our dinner hour; so Carmen was free from the duty of entertaining her lover, and had time to devote to me, even showing herself affectionate and unreserved.

"You retired early last night because you felt bored. Really we do not know how to entertain you, and it will be hard for you if you do not try to find some amusement for yourself in the country."

“Don’t worry yourself on that account. I like the country very much, and I never feel bored there. This place is beautiful; this morning I had a splendid bath.”

“And how is my ungrateful friend Benigna? How sorry I am that she will not come! Your mother is very agreeable, and I always liked her—now with all the more reason.”

“You see it is not easy to make my mother stir. She always has so much to do.”

After these commonplace remarks my prospective aunt and I sat like ninnies, without knowing what to say. At last she said courteously and very amiably:

“As you brought me such a beautiful present, would you not like to see some of the others I have received? I keep them in a room by themselves, because the girls are so curious and so fond of meddling. Come this way.”

I followed after her. She carried several keys in her pocket, which rattled prettily, with a familiar sound, as she walked along. She took out the bunch of keys, opened the mysterious door, and pulled back the curtains, dis-

playing the splendors of the wedding gifts. When I say splendors, it should not be taken too literally, because there were plenty of articles of provincial make; and others, though they came from Madrid, were not of the finest taste—at least so far as I am able to judge of those things. The bride-elect went on telling me about them all. That black satin dress, trimmed with jet, was a present from the bridegroom, as were also the pearl ear-rings set with diamonds. Papa had squandered his money on a rich blue silk brocade; and there, too, were the little hats to correspond. Another dress seemed very beautiful to my uninitiated eyes: it was a dull white silk, with a delicate net-work of imitation pearls in front, a beautiful train, and two clusters of leaves and flowers, placed with exquisite taste.

This, Carmen said, was a thing without utility, a caprice of Señora Sotopeña's, who had been commissioned with the selection of finery in Madrid, and who had insisted that the bride must have an evening dress. The jewels given by the father were some old family jewels reset; there was a splendid brooch, and

several other things. The Sotopeña family had sent her an elegant fan, representing Fortuny's "Vicarage," and with shell sticks. Her brother had given her an ordinary-looking bracelet. Then followed a collection of jewel-cases, albums, useless articles,—the thousand and one trifles, as ordinary as they are worthless, which are only bought and sold on the pretext of giving a present on the occasion of a wedding or birthday. Behind them all, in one corner, as though ashamed of itself, was a most singular object—an enormous rat-trap.

"Why, who gave you that?" I asked, without being able to restrain my laughter.

"Who else could it be but Serafín," she replied, joining in my mirth.

"Is it possible!"

"Yes; and he felt so proud of it. I wish you could have seen him holding his rat-trap on high, exclaiming:

"This, at least, will be useful!"

"But about that Serafín,—is he crazy, foolish, or what is he?"

"In my opinion, he has not got over being a child. He has not a bad heart, and sometimes

makes bright remarks. But a moment afterward he'll fly off on a tangent, and say all sorts of silly things. Sometimes, for example, he will make a sound observation regarding some point of theology or morality,—I know it is so because Father Moreno says so,—and again he is exceedingly stupid about the simplest facts. Once we gave him some candle snuffers, telling him to snuff a candle, and he took them, looked at them attentively, wet his fingers in his mouth, snuffed the candle with his fingers, and then, opening the snuffers, put the bit of wick inside, saying proudly: 'I can see very well how you work, little box!'"

We were still laughing at this anecdote when we went out into the garden. My prospective aunt showed me the outbuildings, the hen house, the stables, and the orchard, inviting me to taste the fruit of the sweet cherry, to pick some flowers, and to try the swing and the trapeze.

Father Moreno made his appearance in the garden, calm, communicative, and even jocose. He questioned me about certain people who

preferred to take a dip rather than attend mass celebrated by a friar; about Serafín, who could not be found to do service as acolyte; about our triumphal excursion through San Andrés. Señor Aldao also was not long in presenting himself. He was brushed and waxed, his mustaches dyed, and his cranium glistening like a billiard-ball; but he looked to me like a wreck, under the green shade of his opened umbrella. He asked me if I "had seen it all," with the air of a Medici inquiring whether a foreigner has visited his palaces and galleries. Then he added:

"What do you think of the yew—the famous yew-tree?"

"Ah, it is magnificent, wonderful!"

"An English naval officer was here last year who admired it enthusiastically and wanted to photograph it. He carried away more than ten different views. Don Vicente Sotopeña assures me that Castelar, in his speech at the Literary Contest, praised the yew very highly when speaking of the marvelous beauties of Galicia. Castelar is a great orator, hey? Flowery,—above all things flowery."

Señor Aldao appeared to me like one of those men who carry their vanity (somewhat concealed in other men) outside and entirely visible to everybody. I afterward found out that he had always been vain, and founded his vanity on the most hollow and superficial things. When a young man he prided himself on his dandyfied appearance, his waxed mustaches, and eyebrows drawn out straight. Afterward he was seized with the nobility fever, and on all occasions wore his uniform as an officer in the militia, dreaming about the marquisate of Tejo. He made a sort of platonic love to the said marquisate, attaching himself closely to the civil governors when he desired a title from Castile, and to the bishops when he wanted it to be palatine. However, his desire for vulgar display was never gratified. An old man now, the extraordinary power Don Vicente wielded, and his absolute control over the province and a great part of Galicia, had made Señor Aldao comprehend that social rank, in our times, is not founded on parchments, more or less musty. "Nowadays politics absorb everything," he used to say. "The

man who can give away sugar-plums with one hand, while he wields the lash with the other, is the real celebrity." That was one reason why he had received my uncle's matrimonial proposals with so much favor. He saw in them the handle whereby he might fasten on to the great Galician boss's coat-tails, and thus gratify a multitude of miserable ambitions he had preserved for years, and which were getting sour, viz., that about the cross; the rousing up of a bill for a carriage-road, which was sleeping the sleep of the just; and I don't know what other trifles in connection with the Provincial Legislature and contracts.

No matter how much we may search the depths of the human heart, we never succeed in disentangling the cause of certain hidden feelings. Envy, competition, and emulation demand, it would seem, something like equality, and one cannot understand how those bad passions are developed when not the slightest equality exists between the envious one and the man he envies. Can a soprano who sings in comic opera envy Patti, or a simple lady of the middle class, the queen? Well, they do,

without any doubt, and from the obscurity wherein they dwell they try to cast a feeble ray of light which will compete with that of the star.

In the same way, Don Román Aldao, a small, provincial gentleman, who enjoyed only a moderate income, indulged himself at times in impulses to compete with Don Vicente Sotopaña, the renowned politician, the shining light of the law, the famous chief, the great boss of Galicia, the lawyer overrun with succulent cases, the millionaire, the man of great and universal influence.

And in what particular did he want to eclipse Sotopaña? Why, in the matter of their respective country seats. Don Vicente owned a sort of royal estate near Pontevedra, where he could rest from his labors and enjoy his leisure hours; and whenever Señor Aldao heard any one speak of his magnificent villa, of his orange orchard, of his grove of eucalyptus trees, of his marble statues, and of the other beauties which were displayed at *Naranjal*, his face would wear a scowl, his lips would be compressed in mortified pride, and

he would ask the people with whom he was speaking:

“What do you think of the tree, my yew? An English naval officer praised it most enthusiastically and wanted to take views of it,” etc.

It was a fancy of Don Román's, never to be realized, that he could beautify his estate in imitation of *Naranjal*. Nature was an accomplice in his dream, however, for, besides the gigantic yew-tree which she had created, she spread around it all the charms which she is accustomed to display in that corner of paradise which is called *Rias Bajas*. The sun, the ocean, the sky, the climate, the beach, the vegetation of a district so luxuriant, formed an oasis of Tejo, though it could not compete with *Naranjal* in what depended on the work of man. Art may make a great show in the country, but the highest charm of a country seat depends on Nature. But our Don Román did not understand this. He did not appreciate the ineffable sweetness and repose of the country, which causes a man to forget the pleasures of social life. On the contrary, he longed for the bustle, the style, the glories

and pomps of a proprietor and local magnate, and felt, above all, the urgings of his vanity, which was so absurd, because so impotent. Of course, Aldao did not attempt to copy splendors like those of the famous chapel of stalactites, so highly praised by newspaper writers and tourists. But if, for example, they set up at *Naranjal* a spacious breakfast room, in an arbor covered with jasmine-vines, immediately Don Román would fall to planning a rickety place, covered with honeysuckle, wherein they might take their chocolate. Was there fine statuary at *Naranjal*? Out Don Román Aldao would come with his plaster busts, his "Four Seasons," or his group of "Cupids," and would place them in the middle of a meadow or an espalier. If they introduced a conservatory at *Naranjal*, with a fine collection of ferns and orchids, immediately after Don Román would repair to Pontevedra, and purchase all the worn-out window-frames he could find, in order to fit up a cheap hot-house, filled with stiff and insufferable begonias. Did they have rustic tables and seats brought from Switzerland at *Naranjal*?

Señor Aldao would show the village carpenter how to saw pine cones in two, and with the trunks of the pine trees would make rustic seats and all kinds of furniture. And, to crown all, there was the yew-tree !

On the first day of my stay at Tejo some people came from Pontevedra to dine : Señor Aldao's oldest son, Luciano, with his child, a boy about four years old, and a provincial deputy named Castro Mera, who was my uncle's greatest friend at that time, and head of the clique which represented his political views in the bosom of the Pontevedra Assembly. Everything is relative, and in Pontevedra there were not only my uncle's henchmen but his own public policy, directed by the strict principles which the reader will imagine.

The editor of *El Teucrense* was also there. That petty sheet was a devoted supporter of my uncle at that time, although it used to abuse him soundly six months before ; but there are magical sops to throw to such Cerberuses. They talked a great deal about local politics, which were so small that they were fairly microscopic.

We took our coffee in the Tejo and I gazed attentively at that respectable patriarch of the vegetable world which was destined to play a certain part in my life. The enormous, rugged trunk fantastically covered with moss, with its bark alive and sound in spite of age, easily supported the majestic branches of the giant of the *Ria*, as it was styled in poetic parlance by the writers and correspondents of the Madrid journals when they came to pass the summer there. The manner in which it grew and spread its foliage of an intensely dark green had something of biblical impressiveness. It was impossible to look at the yew tree without profound veneration, as a symbol of exuberant and maternal nature which had brought forth such a sovereign organism.

The ocean, enamored of the beauty of Galicia, embraces her lovingly with its waves, kisses and fondles her with its spray, surrounds her, caresses her, and extends toward her a blue hand eager to press the soft roundness of the coast. The spreading fingers of this hand are the *Rias*. There the air is purer, softer, and more fragrant, while the vegetation is more

southern and luxuriant. That Tejo, king of all other trees, only on the border of a *Ria*, and on land enriched by its waters, could spread itself with such lordly pride. It was the real monument of that region. It gave a name to the country seat ; it served as a landmark to the boatmen and fishermen when in doubt how to find their way back to San Andrés. From its lofty summit one could overlook the surrounding country, and see not only the hamlets on the seashore, but also the group of islands, the famous *Casiterides* of the ancient geographers, and the boundless extent of a sea almost Grecian in its quiet beauty.

In order to build the three balconies, one above another, which adorned it, neither great architectural science nor unusual skill were needed. All they had to do was to take advantage of the splendid horizontal position of its branches, and build on that strong foundation some circular platforms, guarded by a light balustrade, running around them.

The winding staircase found a natural support in the very trunk of the giant. Its foliage was so dense that no one, from the ground,

could see those who were taking coffee or refreshments in the second story, nor those who were dancing in the first, while the person who climbed to the third had to come to the front of the balcony in order to be seen.

Each story had its name. The first was the ball-room, the second the supper-room, and the third, "Bellavista."

At Aldao's you would often hear some one say: "Did you go up to Bellavista this morning?" "No, I went no further than the ball-room."

To tell the truth, even if Señor Aldao should be displeased by it, the ball-room was not very spacious. However, it was large enough to enable them to dance a contra-dance there very comfortably, to the sound of the piano, which was brought out into the garden on such festive occasions. And it was quite charming to dance under its green awning, between its green walls, which hardly allowed the sunlight to flicker through. The platform used to shake a great deal, and so the exercise was dancing and swinging at the same time.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT day, when we climbed up in the super-room to take our coffee, where they had already placed a number of chairs, benches, and rustic tables, the yew was more attractive than ever. A fresh breeze coming up from the estuary made the branches gently sway; the sun, striking full on the tree's top, gilded it, and drew out that penetrating, somewhat resinous odor, which increases in our hearts the rapture of life. The height at which we found ourselves suspended might indeed make us fancy that we were birds; to me, it seemed that the birds would have a pleasant abode in the bosom of that colossus; and suddenly, as if nature took pleasure in inspiring me with one of those desires, impossible to gratify, with which she makes sport of mortals, I felt a desire, or, rather, an eager longing to fly, to lose myself in those blue spaces, pure and

unfathomable, which we could see through the openings in the branches. When I perceived that I was envying the sea-gulls, which, far off, were swooping down upon the cliffs of San Andrés, I took myself to task for my folly, and, making an effort, I gave my attention to the conversation.

As usual, Father Moreno had the lead, and was once more assuring his hearers that he always felt better in Morocco than in Spain, better among the Moors than among the Christians, "of the kind they had there."

"Don't think," he hastened to add, "that we friars have an easy time in Africa. If I did feel more contented there, it was because those poor people do their best to serve one, and treat him with great consideration. I learned the Arabic, if not as well as my brother, Father Lerchundi, at least enough to make myself understood. If you only knew how useful it was to me! Our garb recommends us to those poor creatures. They call us in their language saints and wise men—precisely as is done here!"

"You could not say more clearly that you

would like to become a Moor," observed Don Román.

"I was a Moor," said the friar, vivaciously. "That is," he added, modifying his assertion, "as you will understand, I did not become a Mohammedan; and I didn't say Mohammedan or a follower of Mohammed, but Moor, which means a son of Africa, an inhabitant of Morocco."

"Of course, we know that you did not renounce your faith," exclaimed my prospective aunt, in the tone of gentle and affectionate jesting which she always adopted in addressing the father.

"No, my child, I did not renounce my religion; thanks to divine compassion, I did not go so far."

"But tell us in what way you were a Moor."

"Oh, goodness! Why, it scarcely needs to be told,—and it's a very long story. It went the rounds of the papers; the *Revista Popular* of Barcelona had an article about it."

"Oh, do tell us!"

The friar was well pleased to do so, to judge by the complacency with which he commenced

his tale. He first took out his handkerchief from his sleeve, and wiped from his lips the liquor he had just been drinking.

“Well, you see it was a little while before the Restoration, when politics were in a bad way here, and Spain was all stirred up by the Republic. I was then in Tangiers, feeling very happy, because, as I have told you, I am very fond of Africa. But we have taken a vow of obedience, and suddenly I received the disagreeable order to leave for Spain, to go to Madrid itself, and it was not possible for me to wear my habit; fine times for habits those were! ‘Listen, Moreno,’ said I to myself, ‘it is time to cast off your friar’s garb and become a fine little gentleman.’ You know that they allow us to let our beards grow while we are in Africa, and that is a great aid in disguising a friar, because one of the things which betrays a priest dressed as a layman is his smooth face. The tonsure we were not very careful to shave, so all I had to do was to let my hair grow for a few days before the journey, and get it even with the rest, and there I was. I ordered my clothes from the best

tailor there. And the accessories,—because a gentleman's attire has a thousand accessories,—of those the ladies of my circle of acquaintance insisted on taking charge, particularly the ladies in the English Consul's family. These ladies liked me very much, and understood all about the elegancies of the toilette and how a gentleman fixes himself up. They got me silk embroidered stockings, neckties, ruffled shirts, and even handkerchiefs marked with my initials. But they especially wanted to see me with all my finery on. 'Father Moreno, after you are dressed you must come and show us.' 'Father Moreno, we must give you the last touch, or you'll go away looking like a scarecrow.' 'Father Moreno, don't deprive us of that pleasure.' But I was obstinate. 'Am I a monkey to show off my tricks? No, indeed, nobody shall laugh at me. You shall not see me dressed up. If you like that, well and good; but if you don't, we'll no longer be friends.' The day arrived, and I decked myself out, head to foot; not the slightest detail was lacking—not even sleeve-buttons, for they had made me a present of some. I dressed at

the convent, and went through the most retired streets to take a boat which was to put me on board. Well, will you believe it? In spite of all that, those ladies made out to see me! When they heard that the steamer was going to weigh anchor, they stationed themselves on their balconies, well provided with spy-glasses, and while I was taking my ease on the bridge, they all looked at me as much as they chose. They say that I seemed like another man to them. I should say so! I carried a cloak, had my traveling-bag, wore my hat on one side, and had two-buttoned gloves on my hands."

There was a burst of laughter among his hearers, as they imagined how Father Moreno must have looked in such elegant attire.

"And afterward, what happened then?" asked Carmen, greatly interested.

"I landed in Gibraltar—what a fury I was in to see the English flag floating there! From that place I took ship again for Malaga. Nothing of much account happened except that I met two English Catholic priests, and conversed with them in Latin—because I

knew no English—about the great strides Catholicism was making in England. From Malaga I went to Granada. To tell the truth, I was very anxious to see that beautiful city, so celebrated all over the world, and to visit the Alhambra and the Generalife. As soon as I went out in the street, what did I do but meet a friend of mine, a judge whom I had known in the Canary Isles! He looked at me in amazement, doubting the evidence of his senses. I addressed him, and he finally recognized me. I explained matters to him, he invited me to take coffee, and we agreed to meet the following day to go to see the Alhambra in company with some friends of his at the hotel. I begged him not to tell them that I was a friar. He promised that he would not, and was better than his word, as you shall see. In fact, when we met the next day he brought with him two army officers, two medical students, and a priest; and as soon as he saw me, he began to shout, feigning great surprise, ‘Hello, Aben Jusuf, you here! By Jove, who could think of meeting you at such a place and at such an hour!’ I replied, compre-

hending his object, 'By Allah, when I left Morocco I did not expect to enjoy the pleasure of seeing you.' His companions, already excited, whispered to my friend: 'Why, is this gentleman really a Moor?' My friend, in order not to tell a barefaced falsehood, replied: 'You might know that by his name. I called him Aben Jusuf.' 'And is he a friend of yours?' 'Yes, I met him in the Canary Isles, when I went to take sea-baths.' 'I say, just invite him to come with us to visit the Alhambra, to see what he'll say.' 'Agreed.' I accepted the invitation, of course, seeing I had already done so the night before. My friend, drawing near me, held out his hand, and said: 'Aben Jusuf, I would ask you to come with us to visit the Alhambra, but I am afraid of arousing your unpleasant feelings.' I replied that it must be, indeed, unpleasant for a son of the desert to visit the monuments erected by his forefathers, which they no longer possess, but that, in order not to incommode him and those gentlemen, I would willingly accompany them."

“Did they keep on thinking that you were a Moor?” inquired Señor Aldao.

“Of course. And such a Moor; a Moor of the Moors! I played my part with all seriousness. I overheard one of them say to the others, ‘He looks like all of his race.’ At every door, every window, and every court, I would stop as though sad and depressed, uttering broken phrases, like groans of pain; in short, just as I imagined a Moor might express his feelings there. Once I stroked my beard——”

“Oh, Father Moreno, how I would have liked to see you with a beard!” cried Carmen.

“*Naranjas!* It is true, you have not seen me!” exclaimed the friar, breaking off the thread of his discourse. “Wait, my girl, I think I must have it here.” Reaching up his sleeve, he brought out an old pocket-book, and took from it a card-photograph, which in a moment went the rounds of the crowded gathering in the second story of the tree. The women uttered exclamations of admiration and Candidiña cried mischievously, “How handsome you were, Father Moreno!”

I could not help thinking to myself that he really was handsome. His long hair and heavy beard brought out more forcibly the friar's manly appearance.

“Well, I stroked that big beard that you see there, and exclaimed seriously, ‘If Spain goes on in the road she has been traveling for a few years past, Allah will again lead Arabian horsemen to these plains, which they still recall in their homes in the desert.’ Then turning to those present, without looking at my friend, who was desperately striving not to laugh, I resumed: ‘Pardon, gentlemen, a son of the desert; these opinions have escaped me without my being able to prevent it.’ You should have seen these men, charmed with my outburst. ‘No, no, it is all very well. Hurrah for the agreeable Moors!’ they cried, with other sayings of the same nature. But my trouble began when they commenced to question me about what they supposed was my religion, and the customs of my alleged country. One inquired whether it was true that the laws of Mohammed authorized having many wives. Then another, a cavalry officer,

burst out, 'By Jove, that is the best thing in the laws of Mohammed.'"

This part of the story caused a great sensation. My uncle frowned. Señor Aldao compressed his waist; Serafín hiccupped; Carmen laughed heartily, and I joined in.

"How did you get out of the scrape, Father Moreno? Let us hear it, for that must be entertaining."

"Listen," said the friar, when the merriment had a little subsided. "I became serious, without any appearance of having taken offense, and said in a natural tone: 'Gentlemen, although they call us barbarians and fanatics, we know how to acknowledge the defects of our legislation. I have traveled a great deal, and have studied the inner constitution of many different forms of society, and I assure you that nothing charms me more than a family consisting of one man and one woman, who have vowed to love each other and to protect the fruit of their love. Neither the heart of man, nor the quiet and security of the family, nor the dignity of woman, can be exalted and strengthened by polygamy.

Not even sensual passions are satisfied, for, as you know, sensuality is a sort of moral dropsy, which finally engenders tedium and disgust.' ”

“ Bravo, Father Moreno ! ”

“ Excellent, and what did they reply ? ”

“ They remained dumbfounded and abashed to hear me express myself in that way. The officer looked at me, his mouth stretched from ear to ear, and what do you think he burst forth with, the rogue, as soon as he recovered his equanimity ? He faced me, and said very politely : ‘ And you, Aben Jusuf, how many wives have you ? ’ ”

His hearers again gave free rein to their laughter.

“ What a joke ! ”

“ Ah, he hit the mark.”

“ And what did you reply ? ”

“ The truth is, I was slightly confused at first, but an idea came to me like a flash, and you'll see how I parried his thrust. ‘ That gentleman knows my tastes,’ I said, pointing to my friend ; ‘ I am a man who does not care to sacrifice his fondness for travel and his

independence, to the duty of sustaining a wife and family. I want to be free as a bird, and for that reason I long ago resolved never to marry.'"

"Were they satisfied with your reply? Didn't they ask more questions?"

"Not on that subject," said the friar.

"The conversation no longer turned upon women. They talked about politics, and there my road was still more unobstructed. The medical students and the two officers, who were more liberal than Riego himself, began to praise the beneficial results of the revolution. Then I answered that perhaps I, being a Moor, had a different conception of liberty from theirs. 'Pardon me, for I am a stranger here, and explain to me how it happens that although you have so much liberty for all the world, here, you will not allow some men, whom we esteem greatly over yonder—a kind of Christian saints, who wear gray tunics and have no shoes on their feet, and are called—are called—' 'Friars!' the officer shouted. 'Nice scamps they are! If they are among the Moors, let them stay there!'

Without paying any attention to him, I went on: 'They are greatly respected in Morocco, and they help to inspire us with love for this land, which we regard as our other country. I am amazed that here (according to your history, which I have read because I am fond of reading) they barbarously massacred a number of them in the year 1834 in Madrid, and in 1835 in Vich, Zaragoza, Barcelona, and Valencia, burning their convents. Am I mistaken, or was it so? We don't do so in Morocco to inoffensive people devoted to praying and fasting.' They kept as still as the grave. One nudged the other, and I heard him say, 'See how well-informed he is.' 'He has squelched us!' replied the other. That was what he said, 'squelched.'"

"Well, what was the final result of your Moorish escapade?"

"Bah! You can fancy how it ended. On our return to Granada, while going through the winding streets, near my hotel, I suddenly turned toward them, and said with great seriousness: 'Gentlemen, all that about my being a Moor was a joke. I am only a poor Fran-

ciscan friar, who, thanks to the liberty which reigns in Spain, has been obliged to disguise himself in order to revisit his native land. I now salute you in my true character.' I then turned and went off, leaving them more astonished than ever."

The friar's adventures, told with spirit and grace, made us wish to learn the outcome of his journey. Father Moreno then went on to tell about his stay at the baths of Lanjarón; his discussion with an impudent, saucy-tongued young gentleman, whom he silenced at the *table d'hôte*, leaving him as quiet as a mouse; of his trip to Madrid in a second-class car, always playing the part of a Moor, and availing himself of his foreign dress to censure the abuses of the time in Spain. "As those were remarks made by a Moor," observed the father, "they did not take offense, but were even impressed by my assertions. If they had discovered that I was a friar, they would have sent me off flying. In fact, I felt immensely dissatisfied not to be able to cry out, 'Friar I am, friar I shall be, and friar I shall die, God willing!' But as I was not going to Madrid

to enjoy myself, but because I had been sent there, I had to champ the bit and play the Moor. So well did I do it, that I never once betrayed myself by making any movement peculiar to a friar. I never searched for my handkerchief in my sleeve, but in the left pocket of my cloak. It even seems to me that my Moorish appearance and my great beard gave those gentlemen a bit of apprehension, so that they didn't like the idea of getting into a quarrel with Aben Jusuf."

It was already getting dark when we left the supper-room. Carmen was full of animation, commenting so gayly on the father's story that a suspicion flashed through my mind regarding the Abencerrage with a friar's gown. I tried to dismiss it from my thoughts, but, finally, giving form to the fancies which stirred in my brain, I came to the conclusion, "It can't be with the father that she is in love—but as for my uncle, she isn't with him either."

CHAPTER XII.

THAT conviction took possession of me, and I do not know whether it was pleasant or painful. I know that it caused a kind of revolution in me, renewing the feeling of unconquerable aversion with which my uncle inspired me, and strengthening it by all the lack of affection I thought I perceived in his future wife. At the same time I would ask myself with eager curiosity, "Why does she marry him?"

Three or four days sufficed to convince me that only my mother's passionate hatred could insinuate that Carmen was not well treated at home. Doña Andrea scarcely had any part there, if it were not as an old family housekeeper, versed in domestic management, and a slave to her work. I believe that the only privilege Doña Andrea enjoyed, in her capacity as retired mistress, was to hold—intercourse oftener than was seemly with the wine bottle or the demijohn of brandy. As for the rest,

she always used to address Señorita Aldao with great affection, and the latter, in her turn, used to treat the old servant with indulgence and consideration. Doña Andrea never emerged from her own sphere of housekeeper, and did not make her appearance in the parlor, or make any pretensions incompatible with her position. The only person out of her place there was Candidiña. She was neither a young lady fit to associate with the daughter of Don Román Aldao, nor a scullion devoted to her pots and kettles; she was a little of each, and her presence and ambiguous position, admitted to the drawing-room but excluded from the table, were not easily to be explained. Her younger sister, more humble, occupied a very different position, though no reason appeared for the distinction. Anyhow, it was evident that my uncle's sweetheart did not live like a Cinderella, and that in getting married she was not simply obeying the desire to emancipate herself, to rule over her own household, which so often influences single women to accept the first man who offers himself.

What was the reason then? It was most probably due to the comfortable circumstances and well-assured prospects for the future which my uncle enjoyed. It could not be for any other cause. She had doubtless decided to marry him, if not purely for self-interest, at least because it was not advisable to disdain such an advantageous match. In that case, although Señorita Aldao's conduct did not appear to be delicate or high-minded, nevertheless it was not rightly open to censure.

On the other hand, though I was convinced that this was the real motive of Carmen's action, I noticed in her, while I observed her daily in the intimacy and familiarity produced by the country life, our near relationship, and the similarity of our ages, something which was contradictory to the practical and reasonable procedure I was attributing to her. Carmen displayed touches of vehemence and feeling which proved that she was naturally passionate. Sometimes her eyes would flash fire, her nostrils dilate, and a singular strength of will show itself in that dreamy face, with its ascetic lines. I fancied that under the surface

there must be hidden fire, and a good deal of it.

As I am not a novelist, I am not compelled to make skillful transitions; and as I am not a hypocrite either, I shall mention one fact which I do not know whether any observer or moralist has ever spoken of so frankly. It is that the first glance a man gives a woman, when he is young and prone to love, as I was, is almost always an inquiring look, somewhat loving also,—a look which asks, “Could that woman love me? What would happen if she did?” This is not an affectation of cynicism, nor do I make out human nature worse than God created it; but it only indicates that the sexual instinct, like all other instincts, never rests, although reason may repress it. If I had felt affection and respect for my uncle, I would have silenced that confused murmur of instinct at once. But I did not; my uncle irritated me, and roused my whole soul secretly against him; and so, when I fancied that I perceived in his lady-love the germs of a similar feeling, I felt drawn toward her by a

fellowship of mind which was right on the road to love.

Without a moment's doubt, without feeling surprised at the thing in the least, and without hesitating for a moment in confessing it to myself,—always an easier confession than an auricular one,—I desired and determined to ingratiate myself with my future aunt, if possible. The temptation took hold of me with the greater ease because, as the wedding had not yet taken place, I was spared that brief inward struggle and that misgiving, which are aroused when it is a case of another man's wife.

To tell the exact truth, I did not purpose to win her for myself or even to displace her lover. I was not capable of plotting in cold blood what Luis Portal called a family drama. All that I aspired to do was to discover whether my surmises in regard to Carmen's inward shrinking from him were true, and whether she could treat me with indulgent kindness. I sincerely believed that if I were to succeed in that, my uneasiness would be soothed and would vanish.

Our manner of life at Tejo was conducive to intimacy. When we returned from bathing, we would take our breakfast whenever and wherever we desired; a liberty highly favorable to meetings with Carmen in agreeable isolation, in the orchard or in the garden. It cost me a great effort to get rid of the acolyte in order to carry out my plans, for he was fond of me, and stuck to me like a burr. While he was reading the papers, or playing checkers with Don Román, or picking cherries and strawberries with Candidiña, I would steal off in search of Carmen. I would generally meet her coming out from the chapel, where she had been to hear Father Moreno say mass.

As soon as I approached I would offer her some flowers, and begin to chat. We talked on the subjects usually chosen for conversation with an unmarried girl; whether Pontevedra was lively, about the Virgin's festival, about the balls at the Casino, about walks, about how they passed the winter there, about her friends, love affairs and engagements, and other such insipid subjects, fitted, in my opinion, to lead up to some gallant speech.

I found occasion to compliment her slyly, telling her how becoming her dress was, praising her hair, asking her to lean on my arm, while we walked around, assuring her that such a grateful pressure would not tire me.

She never put on a face of indignant virtue at my endeavors to ingratiate myself with her. She received my compliments with a careless, mischievous smile, as much as to say: "Very well; we understand each other; my future nephew is very agreeable."

She would lean on my arm in accordance with my request, without the slightest hesitation and with decorous cordiality. One day, when I affected a slightly melancholy air, in order to change my tune, she thought I was ill and proposed to take care of me, offering me all sorts of remedies for the body, while I pretended to desire a moral cure. In fact, I could not find an open breach, whereby to attack that little heart.

I observed her conduct toward my uncle. While she treated me, after we were once acquainted, with gay cordiality, her deportment toward her lover was polite and correct, at the

same time that it was submissive and attentive. It might be considered the result of bashfulness or modesty by the uninitiated, but to me, viewed in the sinister light which was in my mind, it seemed the unmistakable symptom of absolute coldness.

When I fancied that I had made this discovery, I experienced a mysterious feeling of sympathy with the poor girl. If she really felt the same aversion toward my uncle that I did, what stronger mental tie could bind us than that? "The bridegroom is repugnant to the bride. Perhaps she is unaware of it, but it is so. It is evident; and that proves her good taste and moral delicacy. I said so all along." Then the same old question would arise, "Why, then, does she marry him?"

While I was propounding this enigma to myself, I did not neglect to ingratiate myself with Carmen. I fancied that all I needed to carry out my plan was time. It lacked but a few days of the date set for the wedding, and evidently, in order to obtain if not the affection, at least the friendship and entire confidence of that young lady, it was necessary to

see her frequently, so that every hour might bring forth its fruit little by little ; as the dried and withered leaves of the Jericho rose unfold when the stalk is moistened with water. "Of course," I would say to myself, when I saw her so amiable but so reserved in all matters of the heart, "this girl is not going to intrust me with the key to the treasure all at once. It will not be an easy matter to find out from her own lips why she has accepted my uncle."

Meanwhile, I was very attentive to her, joked with her, and tried to gain a few inches of ground. My first attempt at a joke was to call her *auntie*. At first she did not relish my conceit, but finally she made up her mind to join in the joke and to call me *nephew*. As soon as I heard her pronounce that name, which implied a certain familiarity, I returned to the charge, and asked her permission to call her *Auntie Carmen*. These two names, the first rather childish, and still more the second, with its aroma of youth and beauty, appeared charming to me, and henceforth I fastened them upon Señorita Aldao, whom I never called by any other name during the rest of my life.

There was a time when I imagined that Auntie Carmen had entered on that stage in which, deliberately or unconsciously, we reflect some of the feelings of others, and through sympathy share the pangs they suffer.

It was one afternoon when my uncle was in Pontevedra, managing and playing the scale of small politics, which he declared that he understood so well. In order to amuse us, Don Román proposed to go fishing for sunfish in the tranquil waters of the estuary. This was usually done on pleasant days, letting the boat float along very slowly, and throwing out the hooks baited with bits of meat or earth-worms. It is really a pleasant excursion on the water, at the most enjoyable hour of the day, for the country. We all went in one launch. Auntie, who was seated at my side, kept joking me because my line never felt the sharp nibble of the fish, while hers was incessantly on the stretch, catching sunfish and some other kinds of small fry. I proposed to change rods, and she consented, but the fish were not to be deceived, and still slighted me. I took advantage of the fact

that Candidiña was quarreling with Serafín, and that Father Moreno, of whose acuteness I was afraid, was amusing himself with the fishing like a boy and seemed unobservant, and ventured to say something very sweet to my auntie. She replied, smiling at me with a look I cannot define, except by saying that it seemed a mingling of brightness and innocent archness. If that was mocking, it was mocking coated with honey, adorned with roses, and seasoned with affectionate mirth.

Suddenly it seemed to me that her glorious eyes were overshadowed by deep sadness, and that a sigh came from that breast—a deep sigh that could only mean: “This is all very well, my dear nephew, but unfortunately I am already bound to your disagreeable uncle, and consequently we cannot come to a good understanding. Don’t be foolish, or I shall have to say to you, ‘Much too late.’”

Nightfall put an end to our fishing. We returned to Tejo on foot by the path already described. There was a moon—that kind of a moon which always seems more silvery in the country, more melancholy and

even larger than when it lights up a city. Auntie went on ahead, leaning on Candidiña, and would turn occasionally to speak to Father Moreno or to me. In order to go by a shorter route, we went through some plowed fields, and even through an inclosure, rousing the fury of a mastiff, who desired to take a nip at our legs.

On arriving at Tejo and entering the parlor, where a multitude of moths and tiny butterflies were fluttering around the lamp, coming in through the open windows, auntie gave an exclamation, saying :

“Oh, in passing through the inclosure I have covered myself with *loves* ! ”

I understood what she meant ; some of those little flowers, or stiff, hooked plants, had stuck to her so closely that she could not get them off. Immediately I knelt down, and commenced to take off the *loves*, right and left. The pests stuck to my clothes also. Without changing my position, I raised my eyes toward her and murmured softly :

“They cling to me, too.”

Just at that moment an ugly bat came in,

with its heavy and stupid flight, and made the circuit of the room several times; making its appearance where we least expected it, and beating its wings against the wall or brushing against our heads, when we were most unprepared. We laughed and shouted, and armed ourselves with whatever we could lay our hands on—handkerchiefs, tidies—and pursued the hideous monster. Serafín was the first to lay hand upon it. In spite of the sharp cries it uttered on being caught, the acolyte held it tightly, asked for two pins, and, stretching out its membranous wings, fastened it against the window frame. Afterward he stuck a cigarette into its mouth, and lit it with a match; and while the bat struggled in its death agony, its persecutor made a thousand gestures and grimaces at it.

It was a grotesque scene which caused us to shout with laughter, and I was giving myself up to the enjoyment of it when I heard Carmen, ask impatiently:

“Candidiña,—where is Candidiña?”

The girl did not appear. Then Carmen went to the window, and cried:

"Papa, papa, come up here. Come and see the bat we have caught."

Don Román answered from the garden, "I am coming;" and presently the old man came in with flashing eyes.

The torment of the bat amused him very much; but Carmen interceded for the victim.

"Serafín, leave that poor thing alone. It is all right to kill it, but not to torture it. Don't be a Jew!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER the fishing excursion, my uncle came every afternoon to make love to his *fiancée*, and all that dawning intimacy between her and me disappeared ; perhaps it was imaginary all along. The wedding-day was fast approaching, and one could notice in the house that excitement which always precedes any great domestic event.

One morning my uncle went to *Naranjal* to invite Sotopeña to honor him by attending his wedding. But the great man was suffering with biliousness, and was just about to start for the Mondáriz Springs, and his many urgent matters of business and important engagements would not permit him to put off his journey even for twenty-four hours. This refusal was a severe blow to my uncle, whose influence in the province would increase on receiving a public testimony of esteem from

the tutelary divinity of the region; from the man who was so popular, even among the men from his province, resident in the West Indies and South America.

Señor Aldao, on the contrary, felt more at his ease when he found out that Don Vicente would not visit them. What opinion would the owner of *Naranjal* form about the ornamental improvements effected at Tejo? Don Román's instinctive regard for his own vanity was very great, and made him fearful that Sotopeña might laugh in his sleeve at the little variegated balls which reflected the landscape, at the plaster busts, at the stained glass windows in the chapel, at the great shield carved in wood, displaying the armorial bearings of the Aldao family, and at the hothouse made out of old window frames, and lastly, at all the arrangements for the wedding.

As the wedding-day drew near, and the friends and relatives sent in their wedding gifts, my uncle took full advantage of his right to monopolize Carmen's conversation, so that I found fewer opportunities to approach her, though my desire to do so increased more

and more. I saw more clearly every day her glacial coldness toward her future husband, though it was disguised and covered up by her gracious manners.

I was sure that I was correct in these surmises; it was impossible that I could make a mistake, as a more disinterested person might. Once or twice I perceived a start of repulsion, a gesture of nervous impatience at times when a woman, seated by the man she loves, ought to show a face lighted up with joy. I also observed—and this lent importance to the first observation—that Carmen did not display any greater happiness or tenderness in talking to her father or her brother. She was respectful, cordial, and affable, but nothing more; never effusive.

On the other hand, I noticed that whenever she spoke to Father Moreno, she did reveal a warmth of feeling impossible to disguise, because it shows itself in the gleaming of the eyes and in the inflection of the voice. Seeing this, I fell into disrespectful soliloquies:

“The little friar cannot cheat me! With those black eyes, that resolute air, that open

character, and the picture with the great beard—oh, oh, what an Aben Jusuf he is!”

These suspicions were confirmed when I became convinced that the Moorish father and my aunt used to exchange those glances which everywhere bespeak a secret understanding; sometimes rapid, though expressive, sometimes deliberate and full of meaning. One would have said that Carmiña and the friar were plotting together to effect some mysterious and important purpose. I even heard them whisper something to each other in the orchard one day. “Can they meet at night?” I ventured to ask myself. But when I studied the arrangement of the house, I saw that it was quite impossible. Father Moreno had the best room in the house, except the one reserved for the bridal chamber, and it communicated with Don Román’s room, so that the friar could not stir without being heard by him. Candidiña and her sister slept in the same room with Carmiña, so that it was impossible for her to attempt to go out at night without being detected. Thus I could find no foundation, on that side either, for my evil surmises.

But nevertheless, I had not the slightest doubt that the friar and Señorita Aldao understood each other, and were seeking for an opportunity to meet clandestinely.

I observed this on several occasions. I noticed the guilty ones, after taking their coffee, attempt to steal into the garden ; in the morning they would try to go secretly away to some nook or corner of the gallery. They were always interrupted either by Candidiña's willful pranks, or by my mischievous intervention, or by Serafín's jests, or Don Román's officious attentions. And Carmen's annoyance was always apparent at such times. The father was able to disguise his feelings much better.

As I tried to think what I would do in their place, I began to perceive that there was one hour left them for a secret meeting, and that was the very early morning. By arising at day-break they could solve the problem. In fact, while the father was saying early mass, the greater number of the inmates of the country house were cosily lying in bed, as a general rule.

As I expected that this plan would occur to them, I began myself to get up at unearthly hours. I would go to bed very early, not without having a lively skirmish with the clerical apprentice, who was determined to chat with me till the late hours of the night. Daybreak would scarcely have come when I would leave my downy couch, and, barely awake, I would rush off to the orchard, which was delightfully cool, still moist with the night dews, full of the mysterious quivering of the foliage on being awakened by the sunrise, and fragrant with the delicious perfumes wafted in from the flowers in the garden. The murmur of the fountain was more melodious, sweet, and changeful than ever, as if it fell from heaven into a vase of glass. All these attractions predisposed me to indulge in a reverie, and even made me forget that I was lying in ambush.

By the second morning it came easier; and afterward I rose early for my own pleasure, as I was then persuaded that my ambuscade would not bring me anything more than the enjoyment of seeing the orchard when so

charming. But I persevered, and on the fourth morning, while drinking in the pure air with delight, it suddenly occurred to me that it would be very pleasant to go up into the yew, and from that height watch the sun rise over the ocean. No sooner said than done. I ascended the stairs, passed through the ball-room, went up to the supper-room, and thence on to Bellavista.

I stopped, surprised and enchanted by the panorama spread out at my feet. Near by was the gentle slope where San Andrés is situated; groves of chestnut-trees, corn-fields, meadows, and several mills, dotting the shores of the winding brook like pearl clasps on a diamond necklace, though they were not yet made brilliant by the rays of the sun. That was scarcely visible, showing itself, like the betraying reflection of a great fire, in that part of the horizon where sea and sky flow together, and where the dark mass of the Casitérides was outlined.

It was a diffused light, like the first uncertain gaze of beautiful, half-opened eyes. The fog still veiled it. When the first rays of the

red globe began to light up the sea, so marvelously calm, a strange quivering stirred upon the surface of the waves, which were tinged with rich colors, as if the hand of some magician had scattered over them gold, sapphires, and rubies. At the same time the landscape became animated, the river glittered in the sun, and the beach at San Andrés and Portomouro stood out pure and white, as though cleansed by the waves, with the silvery whiteness of their sands and the green festoons of their seaweeds. The great aloes, in blossom, displayed their yellow plumes against the background of the pure sky. The red tiles on the roofs appeared like coral. Suddenly, like a bird spreading its wings to fly, the lateen sail of a fisherman's launch shot forth from the infinite blue of the estuary, in front of San Andrés, and behind it came many others pressing together like a flock of doves. I sat there fascinated.

Some hidden prompting made me look in another direction, and I turned my gaze toward the orchard and the house,—the latter closed and quiet at that hour. The coat-of-arms

carved on the wooden shield, the baskets and borders of roses, pansies, and petunias, the little grove of fruit trees, the watering trough, all appeared, from Bellavista, like sketches of a geometrical garden traced upon tapestry. The windows of the silent house gleamed in the sunlight just then.

An event which our imagination has foreseen, though it seems very unlikely to our reason, excites vivid feelings, even if it does not really concern us. My heart began to beat rapidly and my hands turned cold, when I saw both Father Moreno and Carmen emerging from different doors almost at the same time. They were evidently vying with each other in punctuality; they had agreed on a fixed hour; and Carmen's small gold watch and the father's bull's-eye chronometer, given to him by the English Consul's wife, agreed to a minute.

When the young lady and the friar caught sight of each other, they approached each other eagerly, as though they were anxious to meet by themselves, and had something very important to talk about.

Carmen quickly bent down and kissed the father's hand. Then, for a moment, they seemed to be discussing some question in an animated and serious manner, until the father suddenly extended his arm, pointing toward the yew tree. I knew that they could not see me, for instinctively I had hidden behind the thick foliage. I understood their gestures, which seemed to say :

“Up there in the tree we shall be better situated and can talk at our ease.”

As soon as I perceived this, I had a sudden idea. I was burning with eagerness to hear that conversation, whether guilty or innocent, for it could not fail to be of the greatest interest to me. I felt that the first thing they would do, before talking unreservedly, would be to search the tree, although it was not likely that anybody would be there at such an hour. So I looked around for a hiding place.

The foliage of the yew tree was not merely thick, but almost solid, so close that any one could easily hide behind it ; but it grew thinner toward the top. I saw no way of concealing myself except by going down to the sup-

per-room. There I could see and hear them, wherever they might place themselves. So I descended and, getting over the railing, hid myself among the shadowy branches, bestriding the strongest one I saw. Some branches cracked, and two or three smaller ones broke; the leaves rustled, and several startled birds flew off with a great fluttering of wings, to escape my pursuit, as they thought it. Fortunately, the friar and my uncle's *fiancée* were passing under the covered walk of the arbor just then, and it was not possible for them to glance toward the tree, or to see anything if they did. Otherwise they would have noticed the agitation of the branches, comparable to that of the water in a tank when a nutshell falls into it. They were still rustling and quivering when I heard the tapping of Carmen's feet, and the father's ponderous tread, coming up the stairway.

They sat down close to each other, placing themselves so that I could see their faces by looking a little up; and as they were in full light, while I was in comparative darkness, I could all the better study their expression

and even hear their quick breathing, caused by their climb, and the creaking of the chair when the friar dropped his heavy weight on it.

He spoke first, praising their selection of a spot where they might have a confidential chat without being overheard.

"Yes, it is true," said the young lady, well satisfied. "I agree with you, there is no other place where we can talk with entire freedom. Either Serafín or Salustio would make their appearance in the orchard, and would stick to us, and there it would be impossible. Even if they should take a fancy to get up early, they would never think of coming to the yew tree. And have you noticed how persistent they are, how they will scarcely let one breathe?"

CHAPTER XIV.

“PARTICULARLY your prospective nephew,” replied the friar. “I don’t really know what is the matter with that young gentleman, but it seems as though he were watching us. Sometimes I feel tempted to send him to the deuce. Because if he and all the rest did not keep close to our heels, we should not be obliged to make use of this secrecy, which does not please me, my child, because it might give occasion to malicious interpretations; and it is not enough to be good, one must appear so also.”

“That’s true; but if I did not unbosom myself to you, I believe that I should die. There are certain things one cannot explain clearly in the confessional.”

“To be sure; well, now that we are here, let us hope that the Lord will bring us some good out of this bad business. My child, open your

heart, and say all you wish. Here is Father Moreno to listen to you and advise you, not now as a confessor but as a friend. I am really your friend—you know that very well, so further words are useless.

“Well, Father, I have no better friend than you. I am so unfortunate that it is impossible for me to confide either in my father or my brother; we do not understand each other; there is a barrier—I do not know what. I believe that you already guess what I want to consult you about.”

The father smoothed his chin with his hand, as though in deep meditation.

“According to what you said to me, you marry in order to prevent greater evils. I believe that I have understood.”

“No, no, Father, it is not that. The evils that may occur here, I cannot now prevent. I have done all that I could; I have turned myself into a watchman, a police agent, a spy,—everything that one can turn one’s self into,—certainly a repugnant and sorrowful part to play. But I am convinced that it is impossible to protect a woman who will not protect her-

self, and that the whims of old men are harder to combat than those of children."

My aunt hesitated a little.

"My papa," she said, resolutely, at last, "is like a boy of fifteen. He is wild after that girl; blindly following her around, putting up with her mockery, and acting perfectly moon-struck if she makes a silly grimace at him. I should not mind it, if—at least—"

"You mean you would like to have him marry her?"

"Certainly. If the man who gave me being does not lose his soul, I shall feel resigned to all the rest. You know the trouble I had on Doña Andrea's account. While she and my father lived—in that way—all I wanted was that they should get married. I should have my mother's maid for a stepmother, but on the other hand papa would be living at peace with God. Doña Andrea is an unhappy being—believe me, she has a good heart. She has never shown the least disrespect for me, and has taken care of me with a real affection that I cannot describe to you. Only, she has no—what shall I say?—has no—"

“No moral sense.”

“That is it. She is naturally good, but she cannot discriminate between good and evil.”

“That is what I call being idiotic in respect of conscience,” said the father.

“Just so. So when she found that she was old and ugly, she considered it the most natural thing in the world to bring this girl to our house, without doubt, in order to regain her ascendancy over my father, or in order that some member of her family might inherit that honorable post !”

“My child, as you are going to get married, it is better to speak plainly—so that we may understand each other. Formerly your father lived maritally with Doña Andrea, and now—he does not ?”

“You are right ; he does not now.”

“Well, then, it does not make much difference now whether your father marries her or not, if he has abandoned that sin. Still, so long as she remains here the scandal continues.”

“Oh, no, sir ; there is no scandal at all ! Doña Andrea is in such a condition that it

seems to me she cannot scandalize any one," replied my aunt, with a jocose and somewhat mischievous smile.

"So much the better, so much the better; though when people are bound to be scandalized, my daughter, they do not look to see whether a face is pretty or ugly."

"Father, unhappily, there will soon be here another cause for scandal, and that is what they look at. Don't believe that people do not notice it. Not a bit of it. I blush with shame whenever I perceive that anybody notices certain things."

"You surely have no cause to be ashamed, my daughter. Shame was not made for you," murmured the friar in so endearing and affectionate a tone that Carmen blushed slightly, though I believe it was with pleasure.

"I can't help it," she stammered. "A father is so sacred that you do not know how much a daughter suffers when she finds that she can no longer respect him, as she ought to do, according to God's holy commandments. Outwardly I treat him with respect, but inwardly—no, I can't live this way.

There are times when I think I shall go mad ! ”

“ Hoity, toity ! ” exclaimed the friar, gayly. “ Mad ; nothing less ! I have already told you that your head is like a volcano. I suppose you refer to what you have already told me—Candidiña ! ”

“ Yes, sir ; he runs after her like a cadet. And I don’t know what to do, nor on whom to call. He has controlled himself during the last few days in the presence of his guests and of strangers ; but when we were alone, all I can tell you about the way he pursues her does not do justice to it. I will not enter into details which are unseemly ; suffice it to say that one morning I witnessed such a scene that I fell down on my knees at papa’s feet that night, and begged him, in the name of God and the Virgin, to marry that girl at once, or to send her away into service somewhere else.”

“ Do you think that the girl gives him any encouragement ? ”

“ Yes, Father, encouragement ; yet at the same time, when things go too far she defends

herself, and leaves me puzzled. Well, I am not obliged to look out for her. I have tried to persuade her; I have scolded her and given her good advice; I have her in my own room. Her own mother could not do more for her. What horrifies me is that my father,—believe me,—papa does not know what he is doing; he is crazy,—perfectly crazy. He is passionately in love with the girl; I counted upon that when I begged him to marry her; but he replied that the world—the people—and his social standing—oh, Father, I can bear it no longer! I cannot!”

“God bless me!” sighed the friar. “What folly! and, allow me to add, what stupidity! At his age—at his age!”

“Fancy it; he has even gone so far as to say, ‘I will not marry her, because that would be nonsense; but, if Candidiña leaves by one door, you shall leave by the other and go to your brother’s house.’ And he said it with such a tone and air that—why, I shed more tears that day, Father, than I should if my father had died! If he had died! Oh, I wish that he had died, if he were at peace with his

Maker! I would rather see him dead a thousand times than this way—his gray hairs dishonored!”

As she said this, Señorita Aldao seemed to me very handsome. Her eyes flashed, and her nostrils dilated with enthusiasm and indignation. Her bosom rose and fell convulsively. The friar looked at her in amazement.

“You are more than right!” he exclaimed at last. “How much better it would be to die than to wallow in disgusting sins! Death is nature’s law; we all have to pay that tribute sooner or later; but, my child, at least let us refrain from paying another to the devil so that he may laugh at the way he cheats us. How slight a thing man is, my child, and for what vile toys he will go to destruction! Lucifer’s sin consisted in pride, an ugly sin, but it is not so vile, so indecent as—faugh!” and here the friar gave a start like a man seeing some disgusting animal.

“Unfortunately,” said the young girl, trying to calm herself, “there is a little of everything here, and pride plays an active part in this affair. If it were not for pride, papa would

marry that girl who has turned his head so completely. People would laugh at him a little,—that is, a good deal,—but there would be no disgrace, no crime. I should not be obliged to submit to what has caused me such bitter sorrow ever since I reached the years of discretion. Furthermore, I should not have to——”

She hesitated, but finally added :

“I should not be obliged to get married.” Her revelation was of such serious import that the friar sat amazed, shaking his head and tightening his lips, as though saying to himself, “Bad, very bad.”

“So you——” he added, “Carminiña, let us speak without reserve, for we are here, in a sense, as though in the confessional. You are not marrying willingly?”

“Yes, Father, I marry willingly because I have made up my mind to do it, and when I make up my mind to do a thing—— I formed that resolution the day that my father told me that if Candidiña left the house, I should leave, too. Anything rather than hear and see what I have to. I have no other way of protesting.

My filial respect ties my hands and even my tongue. But to sanction it by my presence; no, never!"

"And your brother?" asked the friar, eagerly.

"My brother — my brother has a child every year, and they need money, and my father gives it to them. That closes his eyes to everything; and he has even scolded me many times for urging papa to get married. He says that if he gets married he may have more children, and injure our prospects. I once thought of taking refuge with my brother, but his wife does not want me there, nor he neither. I shall not force my presence where it is not wanted."

The friar remained silent for a few moments, his brow knit, and his hands pulling at the tassels of the cord which bound his waist. His face revealed the greatest anxiety, and he coughed and breathed heavily before venturing to speak, as though he were about to make some decisive and weighty remark.

"Well, my child," he said, at last, "my advice is only what any person of ordinary judgment would give you. It is not a joke to get

married, nor does it last only for a day. No, my child, it is the most decisive step of the whole life, for an honorable woman as you are, by the mercy of God. Tell me the truth, do you dislike that man?"

"Dislike him?"

Another long period of silence ensued. I held my breath. The rough branches of the yew tree cut into my flesh and the hand with which I was clinging to the tree began to get numb.

At length Carmen spoke in a changed tone :

"Dislike him? I do not know. What I do know is that I do not feel any great affection toward him, nor any of that enthusiastic—don't get frightened, Father. I do not mean enthusiastic love. Let's see if I can make my meaning clearer. I should like, when I get married, to be able to look on the husband whom I am to take, in the sight of God, as a person worthy of the respect of all the world. Father, do you think that Felipe is—that?"

"Daughter, I speak with entire candor. I

have never heard that he has committed any crime, but his reputation is not very high in regard to political machinations, and he is not much liked. As you have asked me, I must tell you this."

"That he is not much liked," said Carmen, with remarkable sagacity, "cannot be due to political machinations, for in that respect let him who can win. So I think it is for some other reason. Have you noticed his face?"

"Yes, I have. It is—goodness, I do not know how to tell you, daughter!"

"It is the face of a Jew," said Carmen, resolutely. "It may seem singular to you that I should say so,—I should dare say so only to you. It is a Jewish face, indeed; so marked that it cannot be mistaken. For that reason, when you asked me whether I disliked him, I was undecided. That face,—it has cost me a great deal to get accustomed to it. I don't know whether he is ugly or good-looking, but that face——"

I was listening with all my might when, owing to a circumstance foreign to the conversation, I was seized with sudden anguish. The

fact is, I felt the branch of which I was astride begin to creak with an ominous slowness as though notifying me that it was not made to hold birds of my size. Nevertheless, I kept on listening :

“ Well, my child,” said the friar, resolutely, “ if you feel such an antipathy or dislike toward him as you really seem to, you should not marry him. At least, consider whether you are able to go through with it. Reflect well on what a married woman’s condition is. Remember that the husband you take, whether he pleases you or not, is your life-long companion ; the only man whom it is lawful for you to love, who will be with you one flesh,—that is what the Church says,—one flesh. He will be the father of your children, and you owe him not only fidelity but love ; do you understand ? I’ll repeat it to you,—*love*. Child, reflect, now that there is still time ; don’t be obstinate. I know it would make a stir and trouble to break off the engagement, but so long as the indissoluble tie does not exist—pshaw ! These things furnish food for foolish tongues for a couple of days and then are forgotten. While

as for the other, my child, death alone,—only the death of one of the two,—can dissolve it. Do you understand what the sacrament of marriage signifies? Do you know what a husband is to a Christian woman? I want you to study that question well, my child. Don't say afterward that your friend Moreno did not warn you in time!"

Just then I broke into a cold sweat. It was not fear; no, though the branch was breaking. The danger of falling from so great a height was not enough to frighten me at that moment; but I dreaded the mortification of being caught in such unworthy eavesdropping. For then I could see clearly that my eavesdropping was unworthy, my curiosity an affront, and my lying in ambush an outrage.

The cracking of the dry wood, that dull and agonizing cra-a-a-ck! cra-a-a-ck! seemed to say, in its thick and broken tones: "Impertinent meddler, gossip, Paul Pry!" I seemed to hear the Father's disdainful voice lashing me with these scornful words: "I had already spotted you. I knew before that you were watching us. Fool, you thought that we were

all complacent slaves of passion, and that this young lady and I—well, now you have seen that we are two decent people.”

Making up my mind to renounce hearing the rest of their dialogue, I tried to slide down the branch, mount astride the next, and, branch by branch, descend to the ball-room, and thence to the ground. The operation as a gymnastic exercise was not difficult; but it was impossible to carry it out without making any noise—noise which would surely attract the attention of the two speakers and immediately betray my hiding place. The attempts I made to measure the distance were causing a prolonged rustling of the leaves. My only choice was to keep calm, to hold out, not to breathe, to commend my soul to God, and to hope everything of the strength and good nature of that branch. Consequently, I tried not to bear my whole weight on it, and remained half suspended in the air, in a very painful position. What exasperated me most was not to be able to pay due attention to their conversation, which was then more animated than ever. I do not

know whether I heard the last part very well ; but I believe that the following is more or less what Carmen said :

“ It is evident that we cannot do anything without God’s assistance, but I do not consider it vanity on my part to assure you that I shall fulfill the duties I assume. If you knew, Father, how that word duty sounds to me ! I assure you with all the truthfulness of my soul, if I imagined that I should fail in my duty toward him, as time goes on, I would a thousand times rather die first. No ; neither my husband, nor my father, nor God, shall ever have any cause of complaint against me. In that way I shall live—or shall die happy. If it were to be otherwise, I would kill myself ! I am marrying with my eyes open. Circumstances have placed me in this peculiar position—well, then, with my eyes open, I will be good. I don’t want to make excuses beforehand ; I will be good, even if the earth should sink ! ”

Let the reader smile ; but these words made me wild with enthusiasm ; so much so that I even forgot my dangerous situation. I arose,

as though to applaud her, reaching out my hands toward my angel of an aunt, when, by an involuntary movement, I fell heavily upon the branch; a terrible noise was heard, which seemed to me like the blast of an unchained tempest, and I instantly became aware that I was falling, slowly falling, the heavy, thick foliage seeming to retard my fall, though I scratched and bruised myself fearfully on the sharp points of the smaller branches and the knobs on the larger ones. It seemed as though I was a century falling; and in the midst of my bewilderment I thought I heard overhead, up in the tree, exclamations, cries, and a confused clamor.

Finally, my descent grew faster and faster. I tore some of my clothing, and at last fell flat on my face on the turf. I bounced up like a ball, and went off, running like a hunted deer. What I wanted was to hide myself—to disappear—to cover up, if possible, my wrong-doing and its ludicrous result.

This thought spurred me on, and gave me wings, and even sharpened my wits, leading me to plunge into the covered walk

through the fruit trees, where they could not see me from the yew. From that to the little grove was but a step, and from the grove to the arbor covered with honeysuckle, no distance at all. Into that I rushed, and without paying any attention to my scratched and bloody hands or my bruised condition, excited, beside myself, I lowered myself over the wall, and, once out of the orchard, did not consider myself safe till, pushing on through short cuts and cross-paths, I reached the beach. "A perfect *alibi*!—I was bathing!"

I undressed myself in a twinkling.

CHAPTER XV.

THE wedding took place two days after this episode. I awoke that day with a violent pain in my chest. By dint of applying cloths soaked with arnica, which I slyly procured of the druggist in San Andrés, I had succeeded in partly disguising the scratches and bruises I had on my face. As for my clothing, I had only torn the lining of my coat; that was lucky. The only two witnesses of my fall had doubtless agreed to keep silent; but they would look at me from time to time, and I felt a disagreeable sensation on meeting Carmen's surprised and severe gaze, or the Franciscan's eyes, in which I thought I observed a humiliating mixture of anger and contempt. For that cause I deeply regretted my bruised condition, thinking to myself, "I'll bet I have sprained or broken something, and that will necessarily let the cat out of the bag." To my physical depression there was joined a

mental state of considerable excitement, as the following paragraphs from my latest letter to Luis will demonstrate :

“ My dear boy : I don't know how to tell you what has happened to me. By chance I have discovered Carmen's secret, and I am convinced that she is an angel, a seraph in the shape of a woman. The friar was right when he declared that Carmiña is the type of a perfect Christian woman. Undoubtedly there is something in such a woman which calls for reverence ; something heavenly. I did wrong to doubt it or even to imagine that she might not be a saint. If you knew how unhappy she is, what self-sacrifice she is making ! I will tell you what is going on—and then you say whether there can be greater heroism or dignity of character. I have been lost in amazement ever since I have learned the motives for her conduct.”

I then proceeded to explain affairs at length, praising Carmen's wonderful strength of character ; and added, to finish making a clean breast of it : “ I think that the friar is good, also. Although it may seem very strange, yet I am inclined to think that he does fulfill his

vows. There is no doubt of it, my boy, he will fulfill them. Virtue does exist, of course it does! There is even such a thing as country! I don't know really what my feelings are; whether, since I have seen clearly what my auntie is I love her more, in a highly_refined way, or whether I no longer care for her as a woman. What I am sure of is that my uncle does not deserve the treasure which has fallen to him from heaven. I know I shall never find such a woman, if ever I get married myself some day."

I wrote this letter on the eve of the fatal day. At daybreak next morning I felt sore, as I was saying, and all my bones ached; I had a great desire to stay flat on my back without moving, thinking, or breathing scarcely. But the cursed acolyte came into my room with his customary jokes and boyish pranks, and at once fell to pulling off the sheets.

"What is the matter?" he asked; "is your breast-bone broken? You are like the cats that smash themselves jumping off the roof. What pains our young gentleman? Shall I rub you?"

I arose painfully, and, threatening him with my clenched fist, exclaimed:

“If you talk about falls—”

“Well, we’ll talk about whatever your Excellency desires. *Ne in furore tuo arguas me!*”

“I will argue with you with a shoe, if you don’t keep quiet.”

“Oh, it’s not worth while to put yourself out! Get up, for they are already putting all the frippery on the bride. Don’t you hear the orchestra from the Royal Imperial and Botanical Theater? Mighty good music!”

I could, in fact, hear, coming up from the court, the light, rapid notes of a country measure, which seemed to dance along with pastoral joy. It was the pipers tuning up and playing their prelude. That lively, merry, jubilant music depressed my heart.

Making an effort I set my bones in motion. I felt a depressing uncomfortableness in my chest, as though it held a heavy stone, giving me unendurable distress. Pulling myself together, I washed, dressed myself as well as I could, and went down to breakfast. Nearly

all the guests were there. I noticed that Señor Aldao was uneasy, and learned that his disturbance arose from a letter he had just received from *Naranjal*. Don Vicente Sotopéña's godson and protégé, Lupercio Pimentel, wrote it in the former's name, and after many courteous congratulations and great professions of friendship for my uncle, he went on to say that Don Vicente had commissioned him to be present, in the great man's name, at the wedding feast, if not the ceremony itself.

Hence came Don Román's anxiety, for he was afraid that something might be lacking of the elegance which the presence of such an important personage demanded. He would almost have preferred to deal with the great chief himself. The latter, at least, was very unassuming and frank, and if one gave him country dishes and jokes in Galician dialect, he would not observe any omission. On the other hand, the godson—Heaven only knows! He was young, very elegant, and accustomed to the splendid festivities in the Capital.

After dispatching our chocolate without much ceremony, we proceeded to the parlor.

We could hear merry feminine voices outside in the hall, and soon afterward the bride made her appearance, surrounded by several of her young friends from Pontevedra, invited to the ceremony, and by Candidiña, Doña Andrea, and the little girl, who were all stumbling over each other in their eagerness to get a good view of her.

Carmen Aldao was pale and feverish, with deep circles under her eyes. Her eyelids had a heavy, purplish look, as though she had passed a sleepless night. She wore the white dress with the net-work of imitation pearls, a black lace mantilla, fastened with jeweled pins, a spray of natural orange blossoms on her breast, long gloves, and carried a lace handkerchief and a prayer-book and rosary inlaid with pearl.

After bowing to her lover, who said "good-morning" to her in a somewhat constrained voice, and then smiling at the rest of the company, she remained standing in the middle of the room, not knowing what to do next. But when Señor Aldao, at a signal from Uncle Felipe, said, "Let us proceed to the chapel,"

Carmen advanced, and went up to her father with a frank and eager air.

"Forgive me if I have ever offended you," she said, in a vibrating, though restrained voice, "and I pray you give me your blessing."

As she spoke, she fastened on her father an eloquent, profound, and almost dreadful look, so intense was it. Her father turned away, murmuring, "May God bless you!"

I believe that I saw something glistening in his eyes. There are some things which grate on the nerves.

Her friends devoted themselves to arranging the bride's dress, pulling out her flounces and picking up the pearl beads, some of which were already rolling around the floor. Not walking arm in arm, and in considerable disorder, we set out for the chapel.

It was fragrant with flowers, and entirely carpeted with ferns and anise, while the altar was lighted up with countless tapers. The ceremony was rather long, as they were married and took the communion at the same time. I heard the clearly pronounced "yes"

of the bride, and the indistinct one of the bridegroom. I heard read what everybody calls St. Paul's Epistle, though it may not be so. There the husband is compared to Christ, the wife to the Church; and, in confirmation of the man's superiority, the embroidered stole fell over the head of the bride at the same time that it fell on her husband's shoulder. Carmen Aldao, crossing her hands on her breast, bowed her head and submitted to the yoke.

A number of peasants were among the spectators, attracted by curiosity, and were crowding each other with a respectful murmur in their efforts to see over the heads of the gentry. When the mass was over, the fire-crackers went off, the country pipes gave forth their characteristic harsh sounds, and the people all rushed out in a body, while the bride was surrounded by her friends, who filched the orange leaves and buds from her dress, and gave her hearty smacks.

That was an awkward moment. Where should we go? What should we do? How should we entertain the company?

Castro Mera, who was young and lively, proposed that we should go over to the yew, have the piano brought out into the garden, and get up a dance, while the married couple and Father Moreno were breakfasting, as they had not been able to do so before on account of the mass and communion service. They all consented to this arrangement, but the dancing had scarcely begun when the bride reappeared without her mantilla. She had only taken a sip of chocolate, and came to fulfill her social duties. She herself played the first country dance down in the garden. The second was played by a young lady from Pontevedra, and Castro Mera then danced it with her, whom I may now with propriety call my aunt. Afterward a young lady from San Andrés proposed to have a waltz. I had dragged myself through the country dance only so that people should not discover how much I was suffering with my bruises; but when I heard them say "waltz," a Wertherian thought flashed through my mind: "I will embrace the bride before the arms of her lover have touched her." Rising quickly, and forgetting all about my sprains, I invited

her to take a turn. She refused, smilingly, but her friends pushed her on, and then, making a grimace as though to say, "Well, it will be for the last time," she rested her left arm on mine and allowed my right arm to encircle her waist.

As I clasped her form, I forgot all about my fatigue and bruises, and felt intuitively that I was more in love than ever with that woman who was now indissolubly bound to another. Thus to hold her—in that room walled in by vegetation, gilded by the sun, which at times, stealing through the branches, cast a playful ray upon the bride's hair or brow—made me beside myself. I observed the delicate outlines of her lithe figure ; I felt her warm breath on my cheek ; and the wild fancy which agitated me became a longing so vehement that I was obliged to exert all my self-control in order not to press her so closely to my heart as to hurt her.

Nevertheless, my transport was the purest and most sublimated of all such loving raptures. I felt a heavenly illusion, if I may so call it ; a divine illusion, noble in its origin and

development. What thrilled me most was the thought that I held in my arms the purest and holiest woman on earth, and that, although she belonged to another, she was still a virgin, pure, unsoiled as the calyx of a lily, as the orange blossoms which she still wore on her bosom, and which, as they faded, gave out an intoxicating and delicious perfume.

We waltzed on very smoothly, and between the turns, I believe I said to her :

“As we are relatives now, may I address you with the *tu* ? ”

“Of course ; it would be absurd for you to be so terribly formal as to say *usted* to me.”

“Will you get vexed ? ”

“No, why should I ? ”

I remained silent. The silken folds of her dress brushed caressingly across my knees, and I felt my heart, agitated by the movement of the waltz, beating violently. Then, with an irresistible impulse, the truth burst from my lips :

“Auntie,” I murmured, “forgive me. I have behaved very badly toward you, don’t you know ? I was indiscreet. But then, I am

so glad, so glad ! Because I now know all that you are worth ; and listen—I know it to be so much, that I am like one crazy. Don't you see it ? ”

“ Be quiet, you silly boy ! ” she replied, somewhat short-breathed from dancing. “ If you were really indiscreet, what shall I say to you ? You did very wrong.”

“ I know it,” I said, remorsefully. “ For that very reason I want you to pardon me. Pardon me, come now, pardon me. Will you forgive me ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” she replied, as though acceding to a childish whim.

“ How good you are ! ” I exclaimed, impulsively, in a low, deep tone.

We took several turns more, and felt our heads grow dizzy from waltzing in such close quarters. She stopped for a moment, and I then inquired :

“ Auntie, do you expect ever to dance again ? ”

“ No, this is my last waltz. Married women do not dance.”

“ The last ! ”

“ Certainly.”

"Then give me, I beg you, that spray of orange-blossoms. Do give it to me!"

"What do you want it for?"

"Give it to me, or I shall do something desperate."

"Take it, nephew," she replied, stopping; "and don't ever hide in the trees again."

I grasped the spray as a robber would grasp a stolen treasure, and looked at my aunt, searching her eyes to their depths. I did not perceive either resentment or severity in her while she thus frankly avowed that she had discovered my outrageous performance. But a slight sense of startled modesty was discernible in her eyes, though this severe bearing was tempered by a half-smile and the animation of her countenance, flushed by the dance.

I would gladly have had that waltz last forever. I remained silent, for the force of my feelings tied my tongue; while I felt that I was raised to the fifth heaven. Unable to restrain myself, I must have clasped her slender waist too closely, for suddenly aunt stopped, and with an agitated countenance, but a firm voice, said: "That is enough."

CHAPTER XVI.

WE did not sit down to dinner until three o'clock in the afternoon. We were somewhat crowded because the dining-room was almost entirely taken up by a huge table in the shape of a horseshoe, adorned with vases of flowers placed at regular intervals, and pyramids of confectionery. There were more than thirty guests present ; many of the gentry from San Andrés, several priests, a number of physicians, the adjutant of Marines, three or four landed proprietors, judges, district politicians, young ladies, some of my uncle's political adherents, and even the good Don Wenceslao Viñal, who placed himself at my side so that he might have some one with whom to talk about his archæologico-historical whimseys.

Lupercio Pimentel, Don Vicente's godson, had the place of honor at the bride's right hand. He was good looking, well mannered, an easy talker, cordial and full of fun, after the

fashion of politicians of the present time, who, instead of relying on the force which ideas and principles carry with them, trust to their own personal magnetism. From the commencement of the banquet, I observed that he left no stone unturned in order to ingratiate himself with the company; "those elements," as he would say. He looked around, and I heard him say, bending toward my uncle over the bride's shoulder:

"How is it that the Mayor of San Andrés is not here?"

"Because he is so opposed to us," replied my uncle.

"For that very reason he ought to be here. Our friend Calvete must afterward put his name in the list of guests," he added, pointing to the editor of *El Teucrense*, who bowed, greatly flattered.

After a moment's reflection, Pimentel resumed:

"Let two go after him. If necessary, have them bring him by force, so long as he gets here in time to hear the toasts."

Castro Mera and the officer of Marines rose

with docility, and under a blazing sun wended their way to San Andrés, in order to bring back the refractory and obstinate "element."

While they were serving the soup, the great leader's godson said to my uncle in a low tone, yet so that his words should make due impression on the public :

"Cánovas has made himself out of the question. He has got the opinion of all sensible people against him. The Regency is not feasible with him. A conservative Administration would not be feasible."

It appeared to me—I do not know why—that many of those present did not comprehend the meaning of the word *feasible*, but somehow took it for granted that it all meant something very bad, and highly prejudicial to Cánovas; but they fully understood when Pimentel observed that Pi's party was Utopian, and they murmured their approbation.

I scarcely listened. I was in the yew, waltzing, feeling the floor sway, and seeing the green foliage tremble with a prolonged rustle. At the second course I was obliged to emerge from my reverie, because the clerical appren-

tice, seated at my left, took it upon himself to pinch me, nudge my elbow, and step on my foot at every word that Pimentel uttered.

I do not know what had come over Serafín; perhaps the two glasses of Burgundy which he had imbibed with his soup, had stimulated his impoverished blood and drew him out of his childish foolishness, causing him to utter satirical and biting jests. All I affirm is, that he accompanied his nudges and kicks with some terrible remarks worthy of a Juvenal in a cassock.

“Behold,” he said, in a low tone, “the greatest miracle of the miraculous boss. He has made a great man out of that creature. What do you think of it, Salustio? And what is your opinion of the indecency of us Galicians? We leave the temple of the Lord deserted, and worship the golden calf—*feceruntque sibi deos aureos*. They will not make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Nieves, and yet they repair to the saint of the orange grove, to feed on offices and pap. They all do it—not one is lacking. He who cannot get there alive will be carried there

dead. And you'll not escape the contagion, either. You'll worship the miraculous saint; for if you don't, invent all the magnetic bridges and electric carriage-roads you please, and your countrymen will pay no attention to you whatever. Why don't you become a saint also, you goose?"

Fortunately, the length of the table, the number of guests, and the hum of conversation prevented them from hearing the string of nonsense the ecclesiastical monkey uttered; but I could not restrain my laughter on seeing the amazement depicted on Don Wenceslao's face, who was seated at my right hand.

The saint had just performed one of his miracles, in the person of the lucky archæologist, by getting up for him a nice little salary as librarian to the Legislature; and his face expressed the most profound terror. If Pimentel should hear that wild talk and attribute it to him! In spite of the customary somnambulistic condition of library mice, Viñal sharpened his ears, perceiving the terrible risk his blessed three hundred a year were exposed to.

"Salustio," he said to me, in anguish, "make that silly fellow stop talking. He is drawing attention to us. Stop him, for pity's sake."

The highly excited state of my nerves induced me to go contrary to the wishes of the peace-loving scholar. I also felt inclined to sour and pessimistic censure. What irritated me was my uncle's aspect, overflowing with satisfaction, while he paid more attention to Pimentel than to his bride, and even gave a toast dedicating the banquet to the protector of his disgraceful schemes.

"Cringing people," I thought, "if you want to worship any one, bow down all you like before Father Moreno, who represents the sacrifice of a life on the altar of an idea; bow down before that bride who is the personification of virtue and duty; but as for doing it before him whose only merit consists in distributing pap!—I also am disposed to give vent to my feelings. Serafín is not far out of the way."

Not knowing how to relieve my impatience, and without paying the slightest attention to Viñal, who was pulling at my sleeve, I im-

proved the first opportunity to contradict Pimentel. I think it was about Pi and his Utopias—and the things that were feasible or not feasible. It caused a great sensation when they heard me dare to raise my voice in such an inconsiderate manner, and my uncle looked at me with an expression which redoubled my ardor.

“You say the Republic is not feasible here? And why not, I want to know? We cannot possibly prolong the abject state of anarchy in which we now live. We are suffering from the drawbacks of a monarchy, and, nevertheless, do not enjoy its advantages. There is no cohesion, no unity, while political customs have deteriorated so greatly that nowadays the public man who aspires to set an example of morality appears ridiculous, and he who holds any opinions of his own likewise.”

Pimentel turned toward me, replying with calm courtesy :

“What you desire and what we all desire, in fact, might answer for other races—oh, yes, for northern races ; but here, with the Arab blood in our veins, and our everlasting rebelliousness

—oh, it would be impossible, utterly impossible ! ”

Nobody was a more ardent defender of civil rights than he ; his sacrifices were well known to all (they bowed assent), “ but let us not confound, gentlemen, let us not confound anarchy and license with a just, reasonable, and feasible liberty. The northern countries produce statesmen because the masses are already educated for political freedom ; it comes to them through hereditary transmission, if one may so say—it is hereditary. If you don’t believe it, just look at the theories of Thiers—English public opinion——”

I, not knowing how to extricate myself, caught hold of Thiers like a drowning man catching at a straw.

“ It must be the French opinion you mean, sir ; for you cannot be ignorant that Thiers was a——”

I purposely made a pause, during which my adversary looked at me with some anxiety.

“ Thiers was a Frenchman.”

The priest from San Andrés timidly ventured to say, from his corner :

“Of course he was a Frenchman, for it was he who restored peace to France after the Commune.”

As I looked around to observe the impression my words had made, I noticed that Don Román's face expressed disapprobation and surprise, while my uncle's was flushed with anger, and Father Moreno's lighted up by a roguish smile.

Pimentel replied, somewhat confused: “Of course he was a Frenchman; we were not speaking of that, I believe. We were discussing English public opinion,—for, there is no doubt about it, England is the land of self-government, as the renowned Azcarate proved so conclusively,—while we—our idiosyncrasy—it will not do to implant here what in other nations more—it will not be feasible; because every ruler has to consider the inherent tendencies of the race.”

“That is all talk,” I argued; “generalities, which prove nothing. Let us come closer to the point, if you please. We have nothing to do with races. We are talking about the Spanish Republic, to which all those who are

in authority to-day, big and little, had committed themselves, but which they betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, like Judas. Would they do the same by the Restoration, if it had not given them full swing with the Government's salary-list?"

I did not perceive the insolence of my attack, until I heard Serafín exclaim in his harsh voice, clapping his hands:

"That's it! Go on, that's where the shoe pinches."

Pimentel wiped his mustache with his napkin, turned his head toward me, and instead of answering me in an angry manner, smilingly agreed with me, saying:

"That is very true, Señor Meléndez. The tact of the Restoration in compromising with the revolutionary elements has rendered feasible that which under other circumstances—"

His speech was interrupted just then by the arrival of the Mayor of San Andrés, who was almost dragged in by the committee that had gone in quest of him at their young chief's command. They must all have run up the hill, for they were dreadfully out of breath.

The Mayor was in a dripping sweat, and kept mopping his face with an enormous handkerchief. He stammered out that he did not consider that he was called upon to sit down at such a fine banquet ; but Pimentel, as sweet as honey, seized his hand, found a place for him at his own side, and endeavored by every means in his power to gain the good will of his political opponent.

I should not be able to give the *menu* of that tiresome dinner. It seemed as though all the dishes enumerated in cook-books kept coming on the table, while the stupidity of the servants, and their inexperience in serving, prolonged the dinner indefinitely. The most difficult task of all would be to give a detailed account of the wines, the sweets, the liqueurs, the endless pastry, the coarse Pontevedra preserves, and the cakes sent by this or that neighbor, which, as the donors themselves were present, could not possibly be slighted.

I drank five or six glasses of champagne, but the only effect they had on me was to revive the belligerent spirit which had induced me to attack Pimentel. I felt quarrelsome, aggres-

sive, quixotic, and desirous of pitching into everybody, right and left. And beneath that singular effervescence I felt the throbbing of a dumb ache in the depths of my heart, a sort of longing for something I seemed to have lost. I cannot define it for it was one of those subtle, vivid feelings which sometimes do not correspond to any deep mental need, but to certain fantastical whims thwarted by stern reality.

The bride, at whom I glanced furtively from time to time, had a dejected and weary appearance. This was very likely nothing more than the fatigue caused by the long time they were at the table, but I fancied that it was melancholy, the bitterness of the chalice she had put to her lips, the foretaste of the bitter draught.

And why not? Had I not overheard the conversation in the yew tree? Was I not positive that my uncle inspired her with an inexplicable feeling of aversion, and that only in order to perform a moral duty, the "categorical imperative" of her faith, had she drawn near to the altar, a veritable sacrificial altar for

her? I wanted, at all hazards, to penetrate into the depths of her inmost soul, and read that gentle and suffering spirit. What could she be thinking about? What can she hope for? What can the fair bride be afraid of?

Meanwhile, the champagne, which had only quickened my imagination, began to affect the others more strongly, as was shown by their flushed faces, flashing eyes, somewhat obstreperous voices, unwarrantable and vehement loquacity, loud laughter, and silly effusiveness. Pimentel, although more decorous and self-possessed than the rest, became animated also, discussing with my uncle a grand project which would assuredly be an epoch-making event in the annals of the Sotopeña party; nothing less than to convert the procession in honor of the Virgin into an imposing political manifestation, Don Vicente himself to carry the standard, while all the people of Pontevedra and its vicinity, for seven leagues around, would turn out to furnish an escort of honor to their provincial divinities, the Virgin and their wonder-working saint. Some of the priests were listening to this project, and highly applauded it,

exclaiming: "Excellent—give Catholic sentiment the first place; that's the way!" Castro Mera was vehemently insisting on the excellency of law, a young man from San Andrés was challenging another from Pontevedra to see which could drink the greatest quantity of Curaçoa; the officer of Marines was disputing with the Mayor about the fishing tackle prohibited by law; Serafín was laughing convulsively because Viñal was maintaining with great energy that he had documents which proved that Tenero had founded Hellenes, and was even boasting that he knew the spot where Tenero was probably buried.

Don Román Aldao at last determined to make a move, telling the rest of the guests not to disturb themselves, for he was only going to show Pimentel the grounds and to take a little fresh air. The bride went off leaning on Pimentel's arm, while her father and the bridegroom followed them arm in arm. As soon as they left, the rest became more animated, and the hullabaloo grew so loud that nobody could make himself understood. Some were disputing, others laughing loudly, others were arguing

and pounding the table, already stained with wine and dotted with bits of cake and sweetmeats. Nobody was eating any more; they only kept on drinking, consuming an extraordinary amount of wines and liqueurs. The young gentleman from San Andrés, the one who had made the wager, had been obliged to go to the window to cool his heated brow, while the other one, from Pontevedra, was still unmoved in spite of the prodigious quantity of wine he had guzzled down, and was entertaining himself by teasing Serafín. He had already made him drink a quart of spirits, and now was amusing himself by pouring out sherry and Pajarete for him through a cylindrical bit of pastry, used as a funnel.

The acolyte would sometimes protest, sometimes swallow it down, while his pale and distorted face revealed the effects of the alcohol. Finally he asserted himself, and shouted in a bellowing tone :

“No more; I don't want any more! Get out, I am not a sponge!”

He pushed away the other's hand, and the sherry was spilt over his shirt front, soaking it

completely. Suddenly his paleness turned into an apoplectic flush, and mounting his chair he began to harangue the company :

“Gentlemen, I know I am not doing right to stay here. It would only serve me right if you were to drown me in Pa-Pa-jarete—or some other Liberal poison. You are all Liberals—the first is proved *per se—per se.*”

“*Per so!*” shrieked Castro Mera, and the officer of Marines.

“To be a Liberal constitutes a greater sin than to be a homicide, an adulterer, or a blasphemer. This second proposition I can prove by Sardá and the fathers of the church at my tongue’s end. Therefore I, who drink Pajarete with you, am liable to the major excommunication—*Catæ sententiæ!* Don’t you know what a big-bug of the ecclesiastical hierarchy once said? Don’t you know, you blockheads? He! he! he! Well, he said: ‘*Cum ejus modi nec cibum sumere*’—Hey? It seems that he made it clear enough. *Cum ejus modi nec Pajaritum su—sum—*”

I looked at him with curiosity. There was no doubt that sometimes that toad was sin-

cere in his ravings, and that his true feelings bubbled forth from his lips. The acolyte considered himself nothing less than an apostle, and talked away, threatening us with his fists. His cries became hoarser, his throat contracted, and his eyes, which looked like two big white balls, seemed to start from their sockets. Suddenly he passed from words to deeds, and seizing the bottle near him threatened to throw it at our heads. What most excited his fury was Pimentel's project for the civico-political procession. That drove him wild. Strange effect of drunkenness! When in his normal state, and free from vinous influences, the clerical apprentice was very meek and humble; but as soon as he was under the influence of alcohol he became belligerent and aggressive. He abused us all soundly, and freed his mind especially regarding Sotopeña. I clearly perceived that trouble would ensue, for Castro Mera, somewhat elevated also, rushed to the fray, defending right and left the political principles which the little priest was berating; and as the latter was replying with fearful invectives,—or, rather, insulting

epithets,—I suddenly saw him froth at the mouth, heard his maudlin laugh, saw him double his fists, and noticed that his wandering hands were seeking among the plates and glasses for a weapon—a knife. I restrained Castro Mera, saying, in a low tone, “He has a terrific epileptic fit.”

In fact Serafín was already struggling in the arms of several, who rushed forward to hold him, with herculean strength, or rather a formidable nervous force, a momentary effect of the seizure; he fought like a wild animal, biting, scratching, and kicking so that at times we thought that he would overpower us all.

Finally we succeeded in tying his hands with a handkerchief. We deluged him with cologne, cold water and vinegar; we picked him up by his feet and shoulders, and with great difficulty succeeded in taking him up to the tower, and throwing him upon his bed, where he lay in a heavy stupor, broken at intervals by short, sudden spasms.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE went down into the garden, and the cool evening air served to refresh our heated brains. I thought that I was not even on the verge of what is meant by intoxication, but nevertheless I attributed the strange weight on my heart, the profound melancholy which took possession of me, to the effects of wine, which sometimes produces that painful tedium. Those happy, jesting, merry people, who considered the wedding a joyous event, inspired me both with disgust and an inexplicable aversion. They roamed over the grounds, enjoying themselves and laughing, but I tried to be alone with my own dark thoughts and lugubrious fancies. My imagination took on blacker hues every moment, as though some dire misfortune was weighing me down. I wandered off instinctively to the most retired nook in the orchard, and, opening the worm-eaten gate which lead into the grove, rushed through im-

petuously, eager for quiet and solitude. A clear, energetic voice exclaimed :

“Where are you going, Señor Salustio?”

In voice and words I recognized Father Moreno. He was seated on a stone bench, leaning against the wall, and reading a book, which he closed as he saw me.

“I came here,” he said, “looking for a fit place to read my prayers. I was just finishing. And you, may I ask whether you also have come out from the orchard to pray?”

“No,” I replied, with the impetuous frankness which is the usual result of several glasses of strong wine inside one. “I came because all those people bored me with their noise, their jollity, and silliness, and because their stupidity made my head ache.”

“Bravo, dear sir, you are right, more than right! I also was satiated with both the food and the company. It was a veritable hulla-baloo, and it is not singular that it should scare away a friar—but you——”

“Father Moreno, believe me, there are days when, taking no account of one’s belief, he feels like becoming a friar, and renouncing the follies of the world.”

The friar fastened his calm, powerful, and piercing eyes on mine, saying :

“ Do you really feel so ? Well, then, you’ll not be surprised if a poor friar should reply to you that in my opinion you are already at the beginning of the road to knowledge, and even happiness, as far as it is possible for man to obtain it in this world. To seek for peace and to renounce our worldly affections is not virtue ; it is simply calculation and selfishness. Believe me, sir, I do not envy anybody in the world, but on the other hand, I pity a great many people.”

My pride as a layman did not rebel at his words. I was surprised at this afterward, when I reflected that the friar’s compassion, ironical though it probably was, ought to have given me offense ; because, taking into consideration my ideas, my ways of thinking and feeling about religious questions, and the ridiculous significance in my mind of monastic vows, it was I that should have pitied the friar, and pitied him as one does victims of an absurdity and of a useless immolation on the altars of a mistaken idea. My strange acqui-

escence in Father Moreno's words can only be explained on the supposition that there exists in the inmost depths of our soul a perpetual tendency to self-sacrifice, to renunciation; a tendency, so to speak, derived from the Christian subsoil upon which the crust of our rationalism rests. At that moment of moral depression the thought occurred to me: "Which is better, Salustio, to go on studying, to learn your profession, practice it, get married, assume the care of children, endure the trials and tribulations of life, bear everything which it must bring in its train, sorrow, disappointments, struggles, and combats, or pass your days like that good Father, who, at a wedding festival, takes his book and comes out into the grove to pray so peacefully?"

"Yes, indeed, I pity a great many," proceeded the friar, taking my arm familiarly, and leading me through the grove to a little meadow beyond, which ended in a fence over which *Parietariæ* and wild flowers grew. "To people who judge by appearances only, it may seem that I ought to be envious in the midst of a wedding-feast, or at least consider my con-

dition so different from that of married people, eh? Well, see here, I assure you (and you will not suppose me to be juggling with words, for you know now that I am very frank) that it seems rather as if the newly-married couple inspired me with a feeling of compassion—yes, compassion—when I realize the hardships which await them on their way through life, however happy they may be, even though God should shower upon them all that is understood by the word happiness.”

The friar's sentiments tallied so well with mine just then, that I would gladly have embraced him. But yielding the second time to the desire to unbosom myself, I sat down on the fence and said :

“Father Moreno, the marriage appears perfectly absurd to me. Either I am much mistaken, or it will lead to most lamentable results. Carmiña is an angel, a saint, an exceptional being ; and my uncle—well, I have reason to know him.”

The appearance of the Father's face suddenly changed. His eyes became severe, he knit his brow, and his smiling lips contracted

into a serious, almost austere expression. His face revealed, what was seldom visible there, the stamp of his vocation ; the friar and confessor was reappearing from under the semblance of the affable, courteous, human, and communicative man.

“You speak thoughtlessly,” he said, without circumlocution, “and you must pardon me for bringing you up with a round turn. Perhaps you think that you have something to found your opinion upon, though I really regret that you oblige me to recall *that*—because I desire to forget that you were more indiscreet and inquisitive than is fitting in a person who, by his training and the scientific nature of his profession, ought to set everybody an example of seriousness. You know we have never alluded to that subject, but now that you yourself afford me an opportunity, I shall not let it pass by. I believe that you acted as you did out of the natural thoughtlessness of youth ; if otherwise, my goodness ! ”

“To what do you refer ? ” I asked, feeling my personal dignity begin to assert itself, and looking him squarely in the face.

“Bah! as if you did not know! But I am not one who measures his words. I refer to the tree—to the yew. Do you want it still clearer? To the fall you got for listening to what did not concern you in the least.”

“See here, Father, your garb does not give you a right to everything,—I——”

“You were listening to us? Yes or no. No rhetoric, now.”

“Yes, if you want to know. Yes, but with the desire to——”

“To hear what we were talking about.”

“No, sir; wait; let me explain myself. You may be superior to me in discretion, Father Moreno, and on that occasion I acknowledge it; but as for pure intentions and high-minded purposes,—Father, in spite of all your vows and your belief, you do not surpass me in that regard; I give you my word of honor.”

“I admit that you are right, and it is a good deal to admit,” said the friar, calmly; “and I do so because I have liked you from the first moment I saw you; because I think I can read and understand your disposition, and I do not at all perceive in you fiendish malice, or a cor-

rupt heart, or wicked purposes. Come, now, you must acknowledge that I am doing you ample justice. But in the case we speak of, I fancy that you are laboring under a foolish, romantic spirit, which leads you to go about righting the wrongs of the oppressed, as Don Quixote did ; and that you suffer from a morbid curiosity which sometimes tempts us to meddle in affairs that do not concern us, and that the Lord has given us no commission to regulate."

"But my uncle's marriage——"

"May possibly affect you, inasmuch as it concerns your personal interests ; but as for whether Carmen will be happy or unhappy, whether she is good or bad,—with that you have nothing whatever to do any more than I have with the affairs of the emperor of China, not a bit more, Señor Don Salustio ; and still less to endeavor by means of an indiscretion to penetrate into the sanctuary of a spirit and the intricacies of a conscience."

"Father," I answered, proudly, for I was urged on by my anger at his reprimand, and by my singular and unpleasant predicament, "you

may say what you please about my conduct, and I will pay due respect to your words, not on account of the garb you wear—which does not mean much in my estimation—but on account of the dignity with which you wear it. Let it be conceded that I was indiscreet, a meddler, a veritable Paul Pry, or whatever you like to call me; but that does not prevent me from being right in predicting evil of a marriage made under certain conditions and circumstances. Now that you are aware that I have cause to know all about it, and now that I acknowledge myself guilty of playing the spy, do not deny that what you did to-day in the chapel was to give your sanction to a fatal and horrible mistake.”

The friar kept looking at me, his frown growing all the while darker and more displeased. In other circumstances his manifest displeasure would have restrained me; but at that time no one could have silenced me. I caught him by the arm, and said, resolutely:

“Listen, Father,—marriages which have not been consummated are very easy to annul,

according to canon law. You must know that better than I. Speak to me frankly; I appeal to your honor, Father. We may avert a terrible misfortune. Do you think I had better go to Señorita Aldao, and say to her, 'Poor child, you do not understand what you have rushed into, but you still have time; your marriage is not valid; protest, and break it all off. Don't let the wrong become complete. Free yourself from that fearful thing. In your innocence, you cannot imagine, unhappy girl, what it is to be my uncle's wife. It is a horrible thing, I assure you. I hope I may never live to see it. First, let me become blind! Father Moreno is an honorable man, and his advice to you is the same as mine. Come, now, be brave, break the chain—I will help you, and the Father and all of us will help you. Courage!'"

"What I can swear to," said the friar, "is that you are crazy, or are in the straight road to become so. Or else—see here!" He clapped his hand to his forehead, and added, "How many glasses of sherry have gone down you to-day?"

“Do you think that I am drunk?” I shouted, drawing myself up fiercely.

“I give you my word,” he said, readily, “that I do not believe you are in that shameful condition. I only wish to say that the wine has somewhat excited your brain, producing a disturbance which is more moral than physical, and which shows itself in talking fair-sounding nonsense, in meddling in other people’s affairs and in regulating the world to suit ourselves—goodness, when the one who should regulate it is God!”

“Very well; but if I should say to Carmiña that she must annul her marriage, what would be your reply?”

“I should advise you to take care of yourself, and probably should say to you, ‘Soak your head, my son, for it is red hot!’”

“So you think there is no remedy!” I cried, with painful vehemence. “That we should allow the iniquity to be consummated and the catastrophe to be brought on with our arms folded! But is it possible that you do not know my uncle? Don’t you see the meanness and vileness of his nature—above all, when

compared with the goodness of that incomparable woman, whom you ought to venerate as much as the Virgin Mary, because she is as good——”

I could not go on. Exasperated and flushed with anger, with all the energy of his nature and the spirit of his calling, the friar stopped my mouth by laying his broad hand on it.

“By my faith! by all the saints! I feel like sending you I know very well where, and I would send you there if I did not see that you are in an abnormal state of mind. Serafín drank the Pajarete, but you have the fumes of it in your head. I did not believe it before, but now,—I did not imagine that too much drink was what ailed you; but if you go off in such wild sayings, the greatest favor I can do you is to suppose that you are tipsy.”

I stepped back, protesting and offended.

“Take care, Father, be careful what you say! Nobody has a right to hurt——”

The friar, quickly passing from anger to cordiality, clapped me on the shoulder, saying:

“Don’t get offended. Good gracious! Lis-

ten to me quietly if you can. Your potations have inclined you to take a high and sublime stand, which proves that you have a fund of good feeling stored away in your heart, that springs to the surface when you are least in control of yourself; precisely when you speak with perfect freedom, *ex abundantia cordis*. This is what I have observed, and I tell you so sincerely, with the sincerity becoming a member of a religious order, who neither disguises his thoughts nor concerns himself over trifles. I will even grant you more. Possibly, in the midst of your—ahem—excitement, you may clearly perceive the future, and be a prophet in maintaining that this marriage has been, humanly speaking, a blunder. But you make no account of the aid of grace and of Providence, which never fails the good, the simple-hearted, or those who do their duty, and trust in the word of Christ. Peace in the soul is a real treasure, among the many false ones the world offers. Don't pity your aunt, or me, or any one who walks in the straight path and knows how to defy man's physical nature."

The friar's arguments pierced my brain like a sword. Rather it was not his arguments, but the tone of conviction and veracity with which he uttered them, aided by my state of mind, and the silly admiration of the "high and sublime," as the Father put it, induced by my tipsiness. At any rate, my pessimistic opinions sprang up afresh, and so did my desire to make an end of my wretched existence, or at least of its hurtful illusions. Repressing a longing to throw myself into the friar's arms, I exclaimed :

"Alas, Father, how correct you are in that! Oh, if one might only enjoy your belief and wear your garb! Tell me whether a rationalist may enter a convent. I believe he can. Oh, I feel so sad, so sad. It seems as though my life were at an end."

The friar looked at me with singular penetration. His eyes seemed like two lancets probing my heart, and dissecting its fibers. His tone became more severe as he said :

"Take care that you do not lose your self-respect, or forget your purpose to behave yourself like a man of honor. However, look-

ing closely at the matter, provided you do not make an end of the lives of the others—do what you please with your own.”

I did not turn my head, or droop my eyes, or blush. If the friar’s eyes accused, mine made an open confession ; they almost challenged him, as though I said : “ Agreed, you can read my thoughts, I make no attempt to conceal them. Judged by my views of morality, what I feel is no crime. The only crime is to have performed that marriage ceremony.”

I turned my back on him, and, jumping over the fence, passed on into the fields.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I DO not know whether the desire to get away from Tejo or to seek greater solitude, induced me to stroll toward the beach. Night had fallen. The moon had risen red and angry, but was resuming her serene appearance as she mounted into the sky. The murmuring waves broke against the rocks, when I seated myself with a dull sense of pain and an inclination to give myself up to all the dreams and chimeras of an imagination heated by the after effects of the champagne. The soft ripple of the placid estuary, the tremulous glimmer of the moon on the water, and the mysterious effusiveness inspired by nature, predisposed me to the following monologue: "If she and I had been married to-day, I would get rid of these troublesome people, and would lead her here on my arm; I would sit close to her on this very rock, which seems made on purpose for an experience like that,

which one never could forget. Encircling her waist with my arm, resting her head against my breast, without startling her, without offending her delicacy, I would gently prepare her to share with me the full rapture of passion, to yield herself joyfully to the fated unfolding of human love. And these would be the most joyous, most delicious moments in our whole life. We would be wrapt in silent and profound bliss. How sweet our silence would be! Perhaps such joy would be too great for our hearts to bear. It might be so intense that we could not endure it. For that reason it lasts but a short time, and is rarely found. And," I went on in my soliloquy, "the fact is, such happiness will never be yours, my boy. Auntie Carmen is like all women, and only possesses one innocence. She will lose it to-day. To-day another man will pluck the lily. To-day, what you respect more than anything else in the world, is given over to profanation. No matter how many years may pass, or how many favors you may obtain from that woman, you will never be able to bring her to this beach in the moonlight, through

paths overgrown by honeysuckle, to taste emotions never felt before, to enter into life through the gateway of illusion."

This was the substance of the wild fancies which floated through my brain during the paroxysm of my grief, while I struggled against the depression caused by my partial intoxication. A vague idea floated through my mind dominating all the rest: "If Carmen's lord were not my uncle, I should not be so given over to misery and rage. My romantic fancy for *her* is only my everlasting prejudice against *him*, taking on another form."

I went up to Tejo feeling more desperate than if I were suffering under some real and terrible affliction. I believe that on my way there I threw down and trampled on the spray of orange blossoms I had so eagerly begged her to give me that morning. I endeavored to control myself so as not to commit greater acts of folly, and when I entered the house I avoided meeting anybody and went directly to my room, longing to throw myself on my bed, to fall to cursing, or to toss around until I should fall asleep, overcome by fatigue.

As I ascended the stairs leading to the tower, I recollected that I had the key of Serafín's room in my pocket, and that I ought to find out how he was getting on. He must be snoring by this time, I thought, as I opened the door. I shaded the candle with my hand, and peered in to see what the poor drunken creature was doing. As I looked at his bed, where I thought he was lying, the acolyte arose from the floor at my feet, where he was crouched, laughing and showing his ugly teeth like an ape.

"You little beast, what are you doing there?" I said. "A nice mess you've made of it to-day. You ought to be whipped. Were you praying on account of your sins? Come, get into bed at once, or I'll—give you a good one!"

He rose up. His small eyes gleamed with a cat-like phosphorescence; his face was still distorted, and his stiff red hair put the finishing touch to his wild and impish appearance.

"I don't want to go to sleep," he cried, grating his teeth. "I am enjoying a free performance, and I have a private box to myself."

“What do you mean, you toad?”

“It’s true. Look for yourself.”

His meaning flashed through my mind, and I kneeled down quickly to look in the direction in which the acolyte was pointing. The bridal chamber was directly underneath the tower. I knew it, and quickly recalled that fact before I looked. The ceiling was not plastered, but the beams were left bare, and through a crack in the floor of our story, as the room underneath was lighted, we could see perfectly all that was going on.

I shuddered as I became convinced that I was actually looking into the bridal chamber. It was true! I could see it! I could see it! What a dreadful discovery! I restrained myself so as not to cry out, and so that I might remain there motionless, instead of scraping the floor and rattling its boarding in my insane fury. Fortunately, by chance, by the will of God, there was nothing going on in the room. It was entirely empty. At either side of the toilet table a pink-colored candle was burning in a brass candlestick. There was another one, in a porcelain candlestick, on a stand behind

the large bronze bed. Flowers, roses especially, were scattered around everywhere ; on the tables, on the desk, on the toilet table, even in hanging-baskets. What a profanation of nature ! Roses for such a nuptial night ! The very solitude of the place, the strange silence, worked on my imagination to such an extent that I even fancied I could smell the roses which impregnated the atmosphere of the room below. I seemed to hear through the open window the notes of the nightingale, which usually sang in the orange tree at that hour of the night, and also its fluttering about in the climbing plants in the court. The whiteness of the half-opened bed, the quiet of the room, the graceful toilet table with its vaporous lace folds falling to the floor, all excited me, rendered me wild, and increased the tumult which raged in my heart. My temples throbbed, and I seemed to feel something like the singing of the sea in my ears, for as I stooped down the blood rushed to my head, and I felt like roaring.

The acolyte touched me on the shoulder.

"Look here, monsieur comrade, that is not fair," he growled. "I also have eyes to see with."

"If you don't keep quiet, I'll smash you to atoms," I answered, fiercely.

"Well, at least tell me what you see."

"I can't see anything, you owl," I replied. "Nothing at all, nothing!"

"Haven't the actors arrived yet? Hasn't the curtain risen? Isn't the orchestra playing yet?" he inquired.

"I told you to keep still!" I shouted, angrily.

From that moment the persistent fellow kept quiet, although afterward I discovered that his silence was neither due to his discretion nor goodness.

I still kept on watching, without paying further attention to him. The bridal chamber remained deserted, suggestive, alluring.

I could see the smallest details with exasperating clearness. There were several hairpins on a small glass tray, and pins stuck into a cushion; the pillow cases had a shield embroidered in the center, and a branch of

southern wood was placed in the small font of holy water. I counted the moths which flew in through the window, singeing themselves in the lights; I counted the crystal prisms on the candlesticks.

I thought that my heart would burst when I heard voices in the doorway, a confused murmur of farewells; the latch was raised, and a person entered with a light and somewhat timid step, and alone. It was Carmen.

Oh, Heavens! I prayed for strength not to scream, not to faint. In her white bridal robe, somewhat crumpled by having been worn all day, she was bewitching. The first thing she did was to go up to the window, as though she felt the need of fresh air. She remained there a few moments, and I could perceive the beautiful curve of her neck, and fancied I could read her thoughts. Then she came away from the window and looked at herself an instant in the glass, as it seemed to me with more curiosity than vanity. Her object in consulting the mirror seemed to be: "Let me see how I look since the great event which took place this morning."

Then, with a quickness which showed that she was accustomed to doing without a maid, she began to take off her ear-rings, bracelets, pins, and clasps, carefully placing them on the glass tray, with the deftness which always characterized her purely mechanical movements. Then, raising her arms, she began to take out her hair-pins, one by one. I gazed upon that splendid ornament of a woman, her loosened hair, in all its beauty. Uncoiled, it fell in heavy, black waves down to her knees. A painful restlessness took possession of me. That loosening of the hair seemed to me a prelude to other freedoms of the toilet, which I was about to witness; and the mere thought made my blood boil in distressing fury. Fortunately—and I could have given thanks on my bended knees for that—I perceived that she had loosened her hair only to make herself more comfortable, for she simply combed it out and gathered up the whole mass in a loose knot. After this, she leaned her elbow on the table, rested her cheek on the palm of her hand, compressing her lips and slightly moving her head up and down, like one strug-

gling with perplexing thoughts. I noticed a painful contraction in her face; she had the appearance of one who when she finds herself alone, abandons herself to meditation, and allows the countenance to express the feelings of the heart. Her eyes partly closed; she bowed her head on her breast, let her hands fall into her lap, and—I clearly heard it—she sighed, a deep sigh, drawn from the depths of her heart. Then she raised her head, and remained for some moments with her eyes fixed on empty space. Suddenly she breathed heavily, and rose like one who adopts a firm and decided resolution. And just at that moment—

Oh, I will not look, I do not want to see! A man entered the room, stealthily, with a beaming face, but yet with somewhat irresolute and constrained bearing. If my eyes had had the power of a basilisk's, the bridegroom would have dropped down dead, annihilated by my look. The silhouette of the deicide stood out against the window frame, and I saw the gleam of his white shirt-front. The light fell full on his face, more repulsive

than ever ; on his copper-colored beard ; his hard eyes, which I could have torn from their sockets.

I heard a silly and mocking laugh behind me. I turned, arose, and saw the acolyte crouched down, looking through another crack in the floor. He still held in his hand the razor with which he had widened it.

A murderous impulse ran through my veins, and, trembling with rage, I clutched Serafín by the throat, choking him while I cried :

“I will cut you in bits, I will strangle you this minute, if you dare to look again. Do you hear, you toad ? It will be the worse for you if you dare to peep through that crack again. I’ll kill you without a shadow of remorse !”

“But, you were peeping, too—nuts and old Nick !” squeaked the poor youth, still hiccoughing, after he had somewhat recovered his breath. “What a way you have ! The old Nick ! You have driven your fingers through my throat !”

“I shall not look any more—nor you, either. We were both brutes. If we had any de-

cency, we should not have thought of looking. Serafín, we are not beasts—we are men! No, you shall not look again.”

“Now you are crying—you are half crazy, I declare!” exclaimed the theological apprentice.

“You are the one who is crazy and possessed with the devil,” I answered, making a heroic attempt to repress the senseless tears which were burning between my eye-lids. “I am not crying; but if I did, it would be out of shame for having kneeled down there. I am going to bed; but as I am not sure that you will not get down again on all fours, I shall tie you to the bed-post.”

“Don’t do it, Salustio, don’t,” cried the terrified rebel. “Don’t tie me! I give you my word of honor not to look.”

I fastened his hands with a handkerchief, and his body with a towel. He might have released himself by the slightest movement, but he was so terrified and subdued that he did not even stir. He only groaned from time to time.

I stretched myself on the bed. Who could

have slept in such circumstances? The endless night passed on, and I kept twisting and turning, hiding my face in the pillows, covering my eyes and ears with my hands, as though to shut out the images and sounds which jealousy presented to my mind.

At daybreak I arose from my bed of torture, washed and dressed myself, and without releasing Serafín, or taking leave of anybody, or seeing a single soul, went off to San Andrés, and thence to Pontevedra and Ullosa, like one who flees from the spot where a terrible crime has been committed.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY mother, with her usual sagacity, saw at once that I was preoccupied and morose, but she made a mistake as to the cause.

"They must have slighted you at Tejo," she said. "Don't say it is not so, for I am sure that they treated you in a shameful manner. If not, why did you rush off like a frightened hare, without taking leave of anybody? Come, now, tell your mother all about it."

Although I vowed and protested that I had been treated with the greatest kindness, she would not believe it.

"Well, well, keep it to yourself, make a mystery of it; but I'll find it out, for everything leaks out. Some of the others will tell me all about it."

I had to tell her all the particulars of the wedding; or, rather, she went ahead of my story, and showed herself acquainted with details in a way that amazed me. She was posted on points where I was ignorant. It was char-

acteristic of her quick and sharp wit to master the minor matters of life, but to remain in ignorance of its deep, eternal laws, which can be perceived only by superior minds, and which will control life until its last breath is drawn, and the universe grows cold through the absence of love.

During the first days of my stay in the village I felt much better. The singular frenzy of the day of the wedding had subsided through lack of external stimuli to revive it; so much so that I came to fancy that my enthusiasm over Carmen, my furious jealousy, the poetic reveries on the beach, were only tricks of the imagination, which is apt to feign the existence of profound feelings where there is really only caprice, vague longings and delusions.

Luis Portal came from Orense to pass a week at my house, and his society helped to quiet me down. We took such long walks and ate such quantities of bread and milk that healthy fatigue and country life did their work, preparing me to listen calmly and even assent to arguments like the following:

“What is taking place in you,” Luis used to say when we were stretched out at the foot of a chestnut, where we had divided our lunch, “is a phenomenon very common among us Spaniards. While we honestly believe that we are preparing for the future and longing for it, we live infatuated with the past, and are really the bitterest kind of traditionalists at bottom, although we call ourselves Republicans. What charms and attracts you in your Uncle Felipe’s wife is precisely that in which she is most in opposition to your ideas, your convictions, and your manner of life as a man of the nineteenth century.

“You say that Señorita Aldao realizes the ideal of a Christian woman. Nonsense, my boy! Will you kindly tell me what attractiveness we can find in that ideal if we examine it carefully? The ideal for us ought to be the woman of the present, or, better, of the future; a woman who could understand us and share our aspirations. You will say that she does not exist. Then let us try to manufacture her. She will never exist if we condemn her before she is born.

“What are the virtues which you attribute to your aunt, and which you admire so much? In what do they consist? They appear to me negative, irrational, brutal. Don’t start up in that way,—I said brutal. She has married a man who is repulsive to her, given herself up to him like an automaton, and all for what? In order not to sanction by her presence another person’s sins. Who can be held responsible for anybody’s actions but his own? That young lady is either demented or a stark fool; and the friar who countenances her and seconds her,—well, I don’t care to say what I think of him, because my tongue would run away with me. He understands better than she does what she is binding herself to, and he ought to have prevented such a barbarous affair. I tell you that the little friar,—oh, well, a friar will be a friar; but we, who undertake to bring about social changes, must differentiate ourselves from him to some extent.

“A woman such as our modern society needs would go out to service, would take in sewing, or scrub floors, if she was not happy in her father’s house, if her self-respect was

wounded, but she would never give up her liberty, her heart, and her person, to such a husband. You have caught the infection of Christianity. You must get rid of it. A perfect Christian woman! And why is it that you are charmed by a perfect Christian woman? Are you, perchance, a perfect Christian man? Do you aspire to be one? Or do you believe that the destined progress of society depends upon the wife being a Christian and the husband a rationalist?

“Salustio, wake up, for you are dreaming. Are you really going to fall in love with a woman, because her ideas are contrary to yours in almost every respect? Well, suppose she were single, and you should marry her, and that she should keep burning the torch of faith,—and—well—I would not give a fig for it all. Leave her to your uncle, she is just the thing for him. They’ll make a fine couple. But for you! My boy, cure yourself of romanticism and Christianity. That does not mean that you should not make love to your auntie; but do it in a human way, without any high tragedy business. If you

like her, go on ! That is, so long as you are careful to avoid family dramas. Leave the dramas for the Teatro Real ; even there the greater part of them are senseless. Well, you understand me, no dramas. But if you dare to tell me any more tales about Christian women and Jewish men, I'll give you a dose of bromide. And, above all things, grind away at your studies. I shall not waste any time next year, even if Venus herself should come and be sweet on me."

Portal's sensible remarks did not fail to influence me greatly. At least they made me ponder on the problem of my wild enthusiasm. It was true that my aunt's ideas and feelings were radically opposed to mine ; I did not believe at all in what she venerated as dogma ; her ideas of morality differed from mine ; the word duty had a meaning for her different from the one I put upon it ; but, nevertheless, that very difference of ideals attracted me toward her, in the same manner that a white man is sometimes charmed by the olive hue of a mulatto, or a passionate gypsy woman by the golden hair of an Englishman.

Was Portal right in saying that we knew no woman suited to us, and that we ought to search for one, to fashion her in our own image, so that she might comprehend us, and her brain work in unison with ours? Or, on the contrary, was a piquant unlikeness of souls a greater attraction, and the having in one's own soul hidden chambers, like Blue Beard's, where a wife would never be able to enter? Why did I exalt that woman, seeing in her a perfect type of womanhood? Why did her self-sacrifice, which would have appeared so absurd in me, seem so sublime in her?

"Luis is right on one subject," I definitely decided; "we must devote our minds to our books; a drama in one's own life is an enemy of study."

In fact, I took up my books in order to take advantage of the leisure of vacation time to do a little reviewing, and when I tried to concentrate my mind on inflexible mathematics, a fearful battle raged in my brain, which I used to call, in my private dialect, the war between straight lines and curved. The straight lines were the equations, the poly-

nomials, the theorems, the problems connected with the cutting of angles, and other such demoniacal puzzles; while the curved lines stood for amorous reveries, hatred of Jews, and all the troublesome ebullitions of my youthful fancy. At first the curved lines had the best of it, but the superior tactics and precision of the straight lines finally routed that undisciplined army, which, in the utmost confusion, retreated toward the heart, its last refuge.

The vacation was drawing to a close, when we had an unexpected visitor. The irrepressible Serafín made his appearance without any signs of bitterness or ill-will, lazy and good-natured as a little dog, and took up his abode at Ullosa. I could not recollect that I had ever given him any invitation, and my mother was sure that she had not. We made the best of the situation, and from the first day my mother devoted him to trimming out the vines on the arbors, picking fruit, and feeding the chickens—tasks which he performed with the greatest pleasure. When we talked by ourselves, instead of displaying the slightest resentment, he embraced me warmly.

“Don’t you know?” he asked, affectionately; “as soon as you left, I untied myself. If they had caught me in such a fix, tied up, a nice time we should have had! What a joke! It was not right to watch them; but it was jolly fun. The wine was to blame for it all. The married couple went off to Pontevedra that very afternoon. Now they are showing themselves off there. The Saint complimented them by a grand dinner at *Naranjal*; they served up fried brains of taxpayers and pickled client’s leg. They had nougat for desert—as your uncle’s house is already rented for the post-office. Hey? He, he, he! Señor Aldao has obtained some cross or other, and is now called ‘Your Excellency.’ And you don’t know the best of it. Haven’t you heard about the irrision,—I mean procession,—in honor of the Virgin? I was amazed that fire from heaven did not fall upon it, as was said—*Pluit super Sodomam et Gomorrhham sulphur et ignem a domino de cælo*. If you could have seen that masquerade! There was Don Vicente carrying the standard; Pimentel, very stuck up, with his white cravat; your uncle

carrying a lighted taper, with a face which looked like mortal sin ; behind him all the political hangers-on, grasping tapers—they who never thought they would do such a thing ! Then came the fellows with leggins, the secretaries to the Common Council, with white ruffles round their knees ; all the mayors, and all the judges, and all the registrars, and all the supernumeraries. Oh, why didn't you go to Pontevedra that day ? We wont have another such in twenty years to come. Even the newspaper men and the masons carried tapers. I assure you it is true. And afterward *El Teucrense* called the procession a festival. What is a festival ? Like a saturnalia, I presume."

Afterward, lowering his voice, he added :

" There was a bishop there also, gaping away, and not out of devotion to the Virgin, either, but for the sake of the great saint with the fat offices. But don't feel shocked at that. Nestorius was bishop of Constantinople. And who promoted the schism of that big hog of a king of England but another pig of a heretical bishop, who was called *Crémor* or *Cremer* !

Don't talk to me about bishops. The Church will have to be reformed by the Pope and us clergy alone—no, I mean the clergy's apprentices and a few laymen with grievances—no matter what the Encyclical, *cum multa*, says."

I assured him that I did not know what that Encyclical said, and then asked him, as though by chance, after Candidiña.

"A nice girl she is! He, he, he! She is there all alone with the old man, now. She'll drive him distracted."

He also spoke of Father Moreno, and I learned that the Moorish friar intended to spend a few days at Ullosa as soon as he had finished taking his sea-baths.

In fact, the Father arrived a few days later, covered with dust from his long ride in the diligence. My mother, who was very fond of him, received him quite coldly at first; she could not forgive him for having officiated at the marriage. But I overwhelmed him with polite attentions. I should have liked to be able to say to Aben Jusuf:

"My delirium has passed away. The sentimental fever has abated. If you only knew,

Father, how well I feel now. Just like a person who uses an anæsthetic to cure his neuralgia, and does cure it. My neuralgia, or lover's toothache, no longer exists. It seems impossible that I am the same one who almost broke his neck falling off a tree, lowered his dignity by playing the spy on a certain wedding night, wanted to throw himself into the sea, and begged a novitiate's habit of you. Here you see a well-behaved young man, a student of engineering, and the son of Benigna Unceta, who, as you know, is a very practical lady. I am now sound and whole."

If not exactly this, it was something very similar that I said to him in the course of a ramble over the mountains. I recollect that he seemed well pleased, and answered as follows:

"I am indeed glad to hear it, but don't be too sure. These heart fevers do not go on as they begin; but the Lord help us, if you get a relapse. And it's our fault if we have a relapse, because we go near the fire. In that lottery, they give prizes to the nearest numbers. Don't you get near. Keep at a respect-

ful distance. Establish a sanitary cordon. If you do not do so, I shall not consider you a man of honor."

Mutatis mutandis, so Father Moreno expressed his opinions. After her momentary annoyance, my mother, whose heart is as good as gold and who is very hospitable, showered attentions on the Father, and insisted on feeding him at all hours of the day, until finally the friar, with a comical air, rose in revolt :

"No more chicken, not even if you cut me in pieces! Not a morsel more! What a woman! Hard-hearted creature, do you want me to burst on the spot? You may wear as big a bustle as you choose, madam, but I must control the bulging of my own stomach."

But her exaggerated gastronomical entertainment of the friar did not last long, for he went off to his monastery after the two days, leaving a great void behind him. His vacation was over, and the leave of absence granted by his Superior in order that he might take sea-baths and recruit his health; so the Moor in a friar's garb meekly wended his way back to his gloomy retreat in Compostela, where the walls

were covered with dampness, and a green moisture was visible on the window-sills and the cracks of the masonry. In spite of the hearty manner in which he assured me that he was willing to fulfill his obligations, I could see that that Spaniard, who was half Saracen, so fond of the warmth of Africa, must suffer keenly both in mind and body on being banished to such a damp and dreary region.

I saw him march away to his exile, recalling with amazement that I had envied him his garb, and even the vows which bound him.

I surely must have been sick with a sort of *psycalgia*, or moral neurosis, this summer, and now that I am convalescent I perceive it.

During the few days before my return to Madrid, as we had no guests or particular amusements, I buried myself in the reading of two or three interesting books, works on philosophy, among them Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason." Exempt as it is, in my judgment, from all flow of mere sentiment and misleading hallucinations, I read it with the purest delight; my mind, already disciplined by the study of mathematics, fairly absorbing the

teaching of the philosopher. I felt the remotest cells of my brain penetrated, in gentle firmness, by those truths of criticism, which, far from leading us to skeptical negations, fill us with a serene conviction of the uselessness of our endeavors to become acquainted with the external world, and shut us up in the beneficent selfishness of the study of our own faculties.

When, after reading Kant, I would roam through the meadows, the groves, the modest belongings of our patrimonial estate, and the peace of twilight would sink into my spirit, I would find myself feeling happy ; completely cured of my folly ; shut up to the straight line. "Understand, and you will be free," I repeated to myself, with youthful pride.

CHAPTER XX.

As I left the train at the northern station in Madrid, the first thing I saw was the red beard and strongly marked features of my Uncle Felipe, who shook hands with me and called a porter to take my trunk. Then he got into a carriage with me and gave the driver the number of his house.

“Are we not going to my boarding-house?” I inquired with surprise.

“You’ll see,” replied the Hebrew, with that hesitation in speaking, and that peculiar contraction of his features, which always accompanied in him a manifestation of avarice. “It is all nonsense that you should stay at a boarding-house, when you have relatives here. I have a spare room in my house, which nobody uses now. We used to keep some old things there. It is a cheerful room, and large enough. You will be better off than in the boarding-house, my boy. And for your studies, as quiet as you could wish.”

I understood his meanness at once. It would cost him more to pay for my board, however cheap it might be, than to lodge me in his own house. But I *there!* I cannot explain the singular effect the idea produced upon me at first. However, I exclaimed:

"I am quite sure that my aunt will not approve of my taking up my abode at your house."

"I'll tell you," answered the husband. "At first she had an idea that for your purposes the boarding-house would be better. She was quite strenuous about it. But I have convinced her, and now she does not object at all."

I kept silent. I was feeling the disagreeable impression one experiences on leaving a warm atmosphere for a current of cold air which whips one's face. My life at Ullosa had been a parenthesis, a pleasant rest, a sort of agreeable sleepiness, and that rude summons to the outside world, to its agitations and changes, just as I was about to take up my studies again, and when I needed all my power of mind and will for my difficult tasks, fairly

bewildered me. Nevertheless, youth is so fond of peril, the surf, and the tempest, that I felt a thrill of pleasure when my uncle rang the electric bell, and the door opened behind which was Carmen Aldao.

With what agitation I greeted her! All my blood rushed to my heart, and I perceived the symptoms of "the ancient flame," as Dante says in speaking of his encounter with Beatrice. My uncle's wife received me with propriety, displaying neither coldness nor excessive cordiality. Fulfilling her duties as mistress of the house, she led me to my room, found out what I needed, showed me where I could keep my clothing and books, and gave me some practical advice about making the most of the four walls.

"Here you can put your ruffled shirts. You can hang your cloak on this hook. The table you will have here, near the window, where you can study better. Look, here is your wash-stand. Always keep the towels here. I got this lamp with a green shade for you, so that you might not spoil your eyes."

While she went on explaining all about

those details, I looked at her with such eagerness that I fairly drank in her features and fed upon her beloved face. What I was trying to discover, when I scrutinized her, was that revelation which, to a close observer, is stamped on every married woman's face, and which might be called the running account of happiness. No, no, she was not happy. The dark circles under her eyes did not betray feverish love, but hidden sorrow. Her mouth had a set expression, like that of all who wrestle in secret to mortify the flesh or the mind. Her temples were slightly faded. Her waist was flatter; it had not acquired the graceful and impressive roundness which is perceptible in women after a few months of married life, even if they do not become mothers. No, she was not happy! How my fancy took this supposition for a foundation, and built upon it! It was not long, however, before I became habituated to living at Carmen's, and my stay there appeared less dangerous to me than at first. Proximity is always an incentive, but dwelling under the same roof does away with all dramatic interest and novelty,

with its commonplace meetings, and this perhaps diminishes the danger.

Although the last years of the course in engineering are not nearly so absorbing as the first, and the difficulties lessen as one ascends the steep hill of knowledge, I had to study enough to occupy all my available time. Carmen's life ran on so far removed from mine that although we were under the same roof we scarcely ever met, except at the customary hours. In the morning we both went out, I to my classes and she to do her marketing and to spend a long time in church. At luncheon I would notice in Carmen a certain animation and strange satisfaction. She had found comfort in the Church; that was evident. My uncle also, contented and talkative, in slippers and without a cravat, would chat with me, would question me, and comment on the events of the night before, his dialogues in the house and in the lobbies with Don Vicente Sotopéña on the political prospect, the insinuations of the newspapers, the last confidential conversation of the Queen Regent with the Austrian Minister, which had been reported in

the Casino by a person who knew all about it.

I seemed to excite the loquacity of the newly-married couple, as Carmen, in her turn, would tell me all the gossip of Pontevedra; the simple tales her friends would write to her; as well as a thousand details regarding the neighbors on the first floor and on the floor above, whom she used to visit evenings, according to the prevalent fashion in Madrid among the middle classes, who improvise every evening a neighborhood party.

In the afternoon my uncle would go out, sometimes alone, and sometimes with his wife. I employed my time in studying or in roaming around with Luis, and so we would not see each other until dinner time. This was a more melancholy affair than luncheon; my aunt would be nervous or excited, or depressed or absent-minded, without being able to disguise it. In the evening she would go up to visit her neighbors, or would do some fancy-work by the fireside, and my uncle would take me out, sometimes to some small theater. So there was no danger there. My close confinement to my studies saved me from the sugges-

tions of idleness. The devil did not know when to tempt me.

You may easily surmise to whom I used to unbosom myself. What are sensible and discreet people like Portal put into the world for, except to listen to the confidential disclosures of lunatics? I believe that my greatest inducement to make a full confession to him was the very fact of the irritation with which Portal would listen to me. His harsh censures were like strokes of the lash or sword thrusts which stimulated me, making me reflect on my situation, and scratch deeper down there in the corners of my spirit.

"My boy," said my sedate friend one day, "I have discovered now what ails you. I know the medicine for your disease. Take my advice, and you will be well in a quarter of an hour. Your trouble has this technical name: *repressed ardor of youth*. And the remedy,—guess what the name of that is? It is named Belén."

"Belén?"

"What? Have you forgotten her already? Belén, that houri with radiant black eyes, who

used to paste little angels on cardboard boxes? So you had forgotten all about her? Degenerate one! Well, I have followed the trail. Old fellow, a magic transformation has occurred. You shall behold that creature now at her apogee. She does not drive in her own carriage yet, but she will do so in time."

"Is that so? Has she found a *gran Paganini*?" I asked, without the slightest interest.

"I won't tell you anything, so that you may judge for yourself. You will be amazed."

A few days later my friend conducted me to a fine dwelling in a street both central and retired at the same time. The porch was respectable, the staircase broad and light, and the door of the second story, at which we knocked, had a remarkably serious and discreet air, with its hinges and knobs all shining.

A middle-aged woman, half servant, half housekeeper, dressed in black, opened the door, and, as soon as Luis spoke, invited us into the parlor, saying that she would tell "the Señora."

"Well, what do you think of this?" exclaimed my friend. "'The Señora' up-stairs,

and 'the Señora' down-stairs. Chairs upholstered in wool, color yellow,—mirror with a rosewood frame,—a good moquette carpet,—fine jute curtains,—two bronze and porcelain vases,—a lamp with an umbrella shade. It appears the stock-broker is not close-fisted."

"Why, my dear fellow, what a change!"

"You shall see. The times are changed; still, this transformation was to be expected. The girl got tired of decorating cornucopias with orange blossoms; but at that time she had nothing better than your skinflint of an uncle, who made her account for every penny she spent when he gave her money for sweetmeats. Consequently, when the worthy Don Telesforo Armiñón made his appearance, ready to relieve her distress, you may imagine what followed. The girl thought the heavens had opened. The first thing that the poor creature asked for was a pair of shoes; those your uncle kept her in were all burst out. You know that in Madrid their footgear is what drives them crazy. Now she wears such beautiful shoes!" Here Portal launched a kiss into the air. "There she comes. Stop laughing!"

We heard a rustling of skirts. Belén made a dignified entrance. It was true; no one could have recognized her in that disguise. Her hair was dressed in the classic modest fashion of a lady. She had on a straw-colored velvet wrapper, and in her ears gleamed diamond ear-rings. She also wore rings on her hands, now well-cared for; and as she walked along, we caught a glimpse of the famous little shoes, high-heeled, narrow, of dark satin, her apple of perdition.

She seemed stouter, her movements quieter and more languid, her complexion even fairer and fresher than before, comparable only to the satin luster of a magnolia leaf.

"Have we come at an unsuitable hour?" asked Portal.

Before answering, Belén fixed her eyes upon me; she almost screamed with joy.

"Ah, so the prodigal is found! Is it really you, you scamp? I only had the pleasure of meeting you once, and then you vanished like smoke. So you have been away for the summer? Well, the rest of us have stayed here and put up with the heat and scorching. But how

long have you been here?" she added, assuming a still more familiar tone.

"He arrived two days ago," broke in Portal, "and has been sighing ever since to see such a nice girl as you. He would hardly let me live with his, 'Come, let's go and call on Belén. Although, as she is now such a fine lady, perhaps she'll not pay any attention to us poor students. But I shall get sick if I don't see her. I shall have an attack of something—'"

"Get out, you fraud!" said the beauty, fixing on me her proud and penetrating eyes with an ardent, yet humble look. "He did not remember me at all, nor want to—not a bit. Since the day of our frolic, if I have met you, I don't remember about it. And I—well what can a girl do? Your uncle never wasted much on me. What a skin-flint he is! They say that he is married. A nice time his wife will have! Well, I am comfortable now; what they call comfortable. This one is of a different breed. Look," she added, without giving us time to sit down. "Come and see my little house, it is so nice. It has a boudoir with a grate, and all that. We have no fire to-day

because it is not cold yet, do you see? But I am going to tell them to light one now. See? You pass through this way to the dining-room; it is small, but very comfortable; and, besides, we have a beautiful kitchen and a room for trunks. Go back this way. Here I have a nice bedroom."

"My child," said Portal, to tease her, "you can't convince me. You have only changed an open skin-flint for a hypocritical one. Armiñón has more dollars than the sands of the sea, and yet he has not bought you a coach nor given you furniture upholstered in silk. Don't tell me how generous he is! He owes you a satin divan and a carriage drawn by an English mare, as much as I owe my life to my father. The Sevillana and Concha Rios go about in their carriages dressed like two queens. What good do your beautiful dresses and diamond ear-rings do you if you can't go to the Retiro to display them?"

"Stop! stop! don't talk to me about coaches, it makes me sick!" answered the fair sinner, greatly annoyed, in spite of herself, by that about the carriage. "Do you believe if I

were to ask him for a coach he would refuse me? But I shall not ask for it. I have too much self-respect, do you know? When I see decent people so different from your Judas Iscariot uncle—my dear fellow, what a creature he is! He cannot be your real uncle. Perhaps your grandmother——”

Afterward she drew us the likeness of her stockbroker.

“The best thing about him is that he comes very seldom to see me. And never until after the stock exchange is closed. And some days he doesn’t appear at all. To-day, for example. He sent me word, and that’s the reason I am taking things so easy.”

“But if he should take it into his head to make his appearance here suddenly?”

“What a difficulty! I would not open the door. He has no latch-key. I assure you there is nobody like him, he is so good. If I were to say ‘a carriage,’ he would answer ‘with six horses.’ Well, if he comes, I’ll tell him in the morning that I went out with Fausta to see my mother and Cinta, and he’ll believe it implicitly.”

“And how are they?” inquired Portal.

“Who, my mother and the other one? Well, my boy, they are unbearable. If you should give them a silver mine they would ask for a gold one. I try all the time to shake them off, for they are like leeches; and how they bleed me! And will you believe it, Cinta has taken it upon herself to preach to me and to say that before she would subject herself to any man for money she would work and make an honest living. She wants to become a singer in comic opera. The trouble is, she will have to learn how first. But I have persuaded my gentleman to rent a piano and pay for a teacher for me, and the girl may come here to take her lessons. One must squeeze the lemon. What is a rich man good for, say I, if not for that? Well, my boy, you must stay here to-day, and do penance in this house. You’ll see what an elegant dinner service and what beautiful silver I have; that is to say, plated, for there is no use in exposing one’s self to being robbed. I’ll put on my nice silk dress, which he gave me a short time ago on his birthday. Nonsense! I want you to see me in my

finery. I'll wear my watch. It does not go well, but it is gold. Luisillo may go off if he wants to, but you must stay here!"

A few days after the call on Belén, as Luis and I were walking through Recoletos, my friend said, half in earnest, half in jest:

"All rogues are fortunate. That Belén is crazy over you; I never saw so capricious a woman. I had to give her some good advice yesterday, lest she should send off her stock-broker and go back to live in a garret in order to be able to receive you whenever she pleases and with perfect freedom. I have told her to hold on to him until she finds another who is more generous and can give her a carriage and solid silver instead of plated ware. How I did preach to her! Never a mission preacher did better. But you are such a lucky dog! What a fancy that girl has taken to you. And yet you don't feel contented. You are still wool gathering. If I cut you off a chicken's wing——"

"Cut me off what you please, my dear fellow," I answered, frankly, revealing my disenchantment in a heavy sigh. "There are higher

pleasures in the world than mere physical gratification. If you push me hard, I will tell you that matter does not exist—that it is a myth; only an idea, and nothing more. Two moments after taking leave of Belén, I forget even that there is such a woman in the world. I leave her house feeling penitent and more of a spiritualist than the devil.”

“I can’t bear to hear you say such stupidities,” cried Portal, furiously. “What do I care for your ideas, or your spiritualism, or your pumpkins! Why, where will you find another treasure like Belén? For you, Belén is the first prize. The trouble is that they have bewitched you at that cursed house of your uncle’s. The atmosphere of dullness and hypocrisy which surrounds you there is wasting away your spirit little by little. Why don’t you come to live at my boarding-house, I’d like to know? You would be like a fish in deep water there. We would drive the blues out of you in short order. Trinito is more amusing than ever, this year. Will you believe it, he not only sings us all the operas but all that he hears at the concerts in the Romero Salon as well. He

fills our ears with "Lohengrin," "Tannhäuser," and "Parsifal," till we can hardly stand it any longer. And the best of it is that he intends to become a musical critic. We came near throwing the coffee-pot at him yesterday, for he nearly split our ears with the "Rhinegold." Come, my dear fellow, come with us."

"I may be as simple as you choose, Luis, but I can't bear that girl. I know that she is handsome, that she likes me, and all that; but it makes no difference to me. Let us see whether you, who did up this package, can undo it quickly. First you know, I'll be telling her to her face that I hate her, which would be needless cruelty. No, no, I shall have nothing to do with it. Vice and folly may amuse us for a while, but they finally fill us with loathing."

"You simpleton, how do you make out your vice and folly? Why, Belén is a treasure for you. She sincerely likes you. She would give up her satin boots and plated ware for your sake. Belén has a heart, while your aunt has none; at least, none for you. A fig for your virtuous women! I hate them. A

plaster cast is more virtuous than they are, for it neither feels nor suffers."

"What do you know about it," I murmured, allowing my hopes to run wild in spite of myself. "How can you be sure that her heart may not be for me? You are too positive. Suppose it should turn out to be for me?"

Portal suddenly became preoccupied and serious. He knit his brow, and said to me in a slightly agitated voice :

"Heaven grant that it may not! I have pondered on that subject, and I swear to you that the best thing that can befall you is that such an event may never occur. Do you hear me? You are a lunatic, fit for the straight-jacket, and you'll fetch up in Don Ezquerdo's hands. Suppose that your aunt should really care for you, that the heart you prate about should be manifested as you think it may be. Well, after it had done so, and you had got to loving each other deeply, oh, immensely, like Francesca and Paolo, what would you do then, you hopeless stupid? Let us hear it. Unfold your loving programme. Would you elope with her? Would you hire an apartment for

her? Would you desecrate your uncle's home without any scruple? Answer, you gawk!"

His friendly interest in me blinded and irritated him. His protruding eyes stared at me angrily, as though gazing at a naughty boy who was about to cut his fingers playing with a knife.

"I don't know what to answer, old chap," I answered, meekly. "What I do know is that I should be happy, do you hear me? completely happy, if that angelic being should love me. Oh, if she would love me! I would ask no more. I would leave her, I would go off to the North Pole, if only I could be sure of her love. That is what I hope for and what I live for. I respect her like a saint,—but I want her to love me, to love me."

"To love me, to love me!" chanted Portal, mimicking my voice and manner. "Why, it is the most senseless folly, by Jupiter, and I can't stand your talking so. It is needless to add that I don't speak in this manner out of any fantastic regard for morality or inflated consideration for home. Pshaw! As for morality, let everybody settle that question

for himself. Home! that is a worn-out institution nowadays, and the one who does most to scuttle it is most deserving of reward from his countrymen. It is not that, by Jove! But it is a question of advantage,—your own advantage. You are losing your mind, and will waste a year's time in your studies, and all for what? For a figment of your imagination! At our age we all dream about women, and it is natural enough that we should; but we ought to dream about a woman of our own make and not about the very one who would make us unhappy if we were to be united to her. Grant that your aunt is very good, very pure and saintly! Her goodness is only passive—submission to her destiny, a moral routine, my boy—and that's the end of it, that's the end. If you were married to Carmen, you would act just as your uncle does; you would not talk to her at table, and would leave her alone as much as possible, because you would not understand her, neither would she understand you, and you would not be able to endure each other. A more complete divorce of soul would never have been seen before.

Believe me, and don't indulge in stupid illusions. Could you become an intimate friend of a neo-Catholic, without culture and full of prejudice? Well, neither could you be a friend to your wife. And what you consider a virtue in her, would surely appear to you like affectation in the neo-Catholic."

"But," I exclaimed, "how dare you deny the heroism of a woman, who, in order not to countenance her father's indecencies, sacrifices her youth, and marries a man whom she cannot love? We have already discussed this subject, and I feel indignant that you do not appreciate the merit of her sacrifice."

"Why, that's just it! that's just it!" vociferated Portal, beside himself. "I will twist the argument around: how dare you characterize as virtuous the action of a woman who accepts a repulsive husband, and does not prefer to sing in a theater, like Cinta, or scrub floors like the scullion who waits on us at Doña Jesusa's? Why, what difference is there between your ideal angel and Belén, for instance? Belén puts up with her hateful protector, because it is for her interest to do

so, in that she eats and spends and has a fine time. And that fine lady, your aunt——”

“Keep still, keep still!” I cried, getting excited in my turn. “If you say another word about that I shall believe that you are a worthless scamp, and will give you a beating, as sure as my name is Salustio. Don’t you dare to mention Carmiña in the same breath with Belén. Don’t you enrage me!”

“You are the one seeking a quarrel, you fag-end of——”

“Take care what you say!”

“Oh, well, you leave me alone——”

“You leave me alone, that’s all I want——”

And so forth. I do not add another detail, for the discreet reader will easily imagine what two good friends in a passion would say to each other. For two weeks I did not see Luis. The truth is, it seemed as though I had lost something, the practical reason of my life, the Sancho who used to moderate my quixotic flights. I did not know myself without his observations, his jests, his anger, and his preachings. At the hour when I used to go to his boarding-house in search of him, I

would feel discontented and uneasy, and even homesick. I missed the habit which had become second nature—the pleasant, friendly intercourse, the intellectual friction, the disputes even. There were days when I actually thought that his old friendship was more to me than my lover's dream. "Confound it," I said to myself, "I did not know that he was so necessary to me. But the fact is I am not myself without him. No, indeed, I am not. But I will not give in. Let him come to me, if he wants to."

Finally he did come, proving once more that he represented, in our friendship, good common sense, or whatever you may like to call that modest and pleasant quality which does not allow us to go beyond bounds, and teaches us not to make life bitter by foolish obstinacy or dramatic fastidiousness. Our reconciliation was effected in the most natural manner. One morning, as we were coming out of recitation, Portal nudged my elbow, and asked with a smile:

"Has the trouble gone away? Shall we make a treaty of peace?"

I confess that I embraced him with all my heart, stammering:

“Luisiño, my dear fellow!”

But he laughed, and said:

“Oh, stop it, you foolish boy; you act as though you had just returned from America after twenty years of exile.”

We went off arm-in-arm, and chatted more than ever that afternoon.

“I will no longer oppose you,” said my friend with a comic air of resignation. “You may fall as deeply in love as an African dromedary or as Marsilla did with the fellow from Teruel, and I will not try to stop the current. You will have to convince yourself of the folly of your illusions. In order to be happy we need well-informed women, who think as we do and can understand us. Well, I believe that it is so; but you have got it into your skull that we ought to have wives like the ladies of the thirteenth century, or the Gothic saints painted on a golden background. All right, go ahead! You will find out your mistake. Aside from the fact that your aunt—well, my boy, don’t depend on that. The

struggle against fate will wear you out. There, now, don't begin to fume. Tell me how your love affair progresses; unburden that dear little heart."

"Luis," I murmured, mysteriously, "I don't know whether she loves me or not; but I am certain of one thing—mark my words! Her husband is hateful to her."

"That proves her good taste."

"I am not mistaken; no, indeed! I observe her closely, Luisiño. The poor girl has lost her color and her appetite. In the morning, when she goes to church, and, above all, on the days when she communes, she appears to be somewhat tranquil; but at night! Oh dear, I believe she has the intermittent repugnance!"

"But her husband? Does he amuse himself elsewhere?"

"I don't think so. He goes to bed at a reasonable hour, even though he may go out to hold a conference with Sotopeña or to the club. He does not attempt to see Belén; she says so. My uncle is close-fisted, as you know very well, and on the score of economy is

capable of being contented at home. Luis, I don't say much, but it consoles me to see that she is sad and is suffering."

"A nice consolation that is! Perhaps you are wrong, and that woman gets on with her husband perfectly."

"If I were to see her cooing like a turtle-dove with him, I don't know what would happen to me."

"Why, that maggot would quit your brain. May the Old Nick get you!"

This conversation took place as we were leaving Mayor Street and were entering the famous Viaduct, or place for suicides. The quiet beauty of the afternoon tempted us to go up to the high iron grating and enjoy the view, perhaps the finest in Madrid.

Without stopping to look over the old books, text-books mostly, the greater part of them greasy and falling to pieces, which an old man who looked like a maniac had for sale in the open air and right on the ground, we put our faces close to the grating and delighted our eyes first with the glorious panorama on the left, the red palace of Uceda, with its

white shields tenanted by fierce lions,—the thousand cupolas and domes of churches and houses, above which rose, elegant as a palm-tree, the Moorish tower of San Pedro. Then we turned to the right, enchanted with the fresh verdure of the garden, which stretched out far below us like a rug of pine trees and flowery shrubs. Far in the distance, the Manzanares traced a silver S upon the green meadows, and the Guadarrama reared its shining white line behind the hard, sharp outlines of the nearest ridges. But what fascinated us, the sublimest note of all, was Segovia Street at a fearful depth below us; down, down, down! Luis clutched my wrist, saying:

“My boy, this viaduct explains clearly the numerous suicides which have occurred on it.”

“It does, indeed, tempt one to throw himself over,” I replied, without ceasing to look down into that paved abyss, and already feeling in the soles of my feet the tingling that goes with dizziness.

“Look at that suicide, my dear boy,” suddenly exclaimed Portal, pointing to a man of squalid appearance, who was also leaning over

the railing. "A man like that is liable to fling himself over at any moment."

I approached the man out of curiosity. The supposititious suicide turned around. How long it was since I had seen his noble and expressive face, his dirty and tattered clothes, his black eyes and graceful bearing! Poor Botello! I felt a singular and extraordinary joy at meeting that ineffectual being, that social residuum, so inoffensive and useless.

"Were you going to commit suicide?" I asked, smilingly, after we had exchanged warm greetings and embraced each other.

"No, indeed," replied Pepita's boarder; "I was only thinking, to pass away the time, how wise a thing I should do if I did throw myself over headlong. That street with its hard stones was calling me loudly. There I might put an end to all trickery and poverty—don't you know? Pepa has almost put me into the street. I scarcely ever smoke now. I still have a room where I can sleep, but that matter of eating is a luxury I am not acquainted with. The landlady is furious because Don Julián has vanished like smoke, and

will no longer maintain me. They have stopped my allowance. Will you treat to a beefsteak?"

We went out to Bailen Street, and were not long in settling ourselves in an eating-house before some very appetizing broiled chops. The prodigal, in a melancholy tone, said to us:

"Some days I feel so desperate that I even think of going to work at something. But at what? Besides, that is a foolish idea, produced by weakness or brandy. No, when I have a quarter in my pocket I wager it and win a hundred. I am not meant for the ignominy of working. Keep that for negroes. Besides, one can always find good friends, who wont refuse a fellow a dollar when he asks for it. Don't think I live by cheating, boys; cheating comes in when one promises to pay, and I never do anything so foolish as that. The man who loans me anything, makes me a present.

"Do you know what a trick Mauricio Parra and Pepe Vidal played on me during Carnival? Do you know them? One is in the

School of Architecture, the other in the School of Mines. They board at Pepe Urrutia's. Well, we had a boarder there, a fine-looking lady, a widow from Córdoba, and a most attractive woman. I was making up to her a little. One night I heard that she was going to a masked ball at the Royal —, and I without a cent!

"But Mauricio and Pepe encouraged me, bought tickets, and went with me to the ball. Well, the masked lady came up to us. I recognized her at once.

"‘I am thirsty,’ she said; ‘will you treat me? Let us go to the supper-room.’

"I saw the heavens opened before me, and the infernal regions at the same time, because I did not have a single penny. I put my hand behind me, and made signs to Mauricio and Pepe. I felt them put a coin in my hand. Heavens! What could it be? A dollar, without doubt, although it seemed somewhat smaller. I slipped it into my pocket without looking at it, and up I went as brave as a lion. She began to eat cakes and drink sherry, while I was trembling for fear the bill would amount

to more than a dollar. It seemed as if the good lady would never stop gorging herself. At last she concluded to stop, and I took out the money from my pocket and gave it to the waiter with a lordly air, saying :

“ ‘ Take out what I owe.’ ”

“ ‘ Why, sir, you have given me a copper !’ ”

“ Well, you may imagine what a row there was. I thought they would march me straight off to the station-house. What a joke ! Well, that is the way I live, and always shall ; more dead broke to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow more so than to-day. Of course, you must know that my Portuguese friend went home ; but I have found a provincial deputy in exchange, who has taken it into his head to be a dramatist ; and I go with him behind the scenes, because he fancies that I know the actresses and actors intimately. And in fact I do know them. Who does not get acquainted with the whole human race in Madrid ? But I don't know what part I play at the Lara, or Eslava, or Apolo. Anyhow, at the box-office they take me for an actor. The actors think that I am a played-out actor ; and

meanwhile, there I am, at my ease with my provincial deputy, determined that they shall put his farce, or review, or whatever you may call it, on the stage."

"Don't you really know what it is?"

"No. He has tried to read it to me more than a hundred times, but up to the present I have parried the blow. We'll see if I can continue to do so. Farewell, my saviors; my idea of committing suicide has now evaporated. Thanks!"

"‘To-day the heavens and earth on me do smile,
To-day the sun reaches to my inmost heart.
To-day you gave me chops, two chops!
So, to-day, I in Providence do trust.’"

As he declaimed this, little Dumas held out to us his dirty, greasy hands, and went away.

"There you have romanticism," murmured Luis, disdainfully, shrugging his shoulders. "What a pity that he and all the rest like him couldn't have a course of lectures on *common-senseology*!"

CHAPTER XXI.

IN spite of what Portal had said, I continued to study Carmen's face and actions, and with the second sight of passion plainly perceived an aversion and dislike, growing all the while more marked and deep.

Ye dramatists, who strew daggers and poison throughout your terrifying creations; ye poets, who sing of horrible tragedies; ye novelists, who have as many murders as chapters,—tell me if there is any struggle more tremendous than that which goes on in a woman's heart when she is united, subjected, fastened to the man whose presence is enough to make every fiber of her being quiver with aversion! And let those who believe that psychology is merely a science of facts like the positive and exact physical and natural sciences, tell us why that husband should so greatly disgust his wife. There is no sufficient cause for it. He had not wronged her by any grave fault.

She is queen and mistress of her home ; her husband is not unfaithful to her but, on the contrary, is very attentive to her and is devoted to his home, and the young wife waiting for him there.

Ah, it is evident that Carmen's antipathy was irrational, and for that very reason all the stronger, deeper, and more impossible to attack and eradicate. One can fight against an adversary when he has a body, but not when he is an intangible shadow, real only in the dark recesses of our soul. There are some husbands who ill-treat their wives, who betray them, who drag them to ruin, and, notwithstanding, are still loved, or, at least, not shrunk from. Who can say precisely whence blows that breath of air called repulsion? It is not hatred. Hatred has its reasons, is based upon motives, can explain and justify itself ; and if I have sometimes allowed myself to say that I hated my uncle, it is because I did not express myself with precision. It was not hatred which his wife and I felt for him, but something more invincible—a profound aversion. Hatred may turn into friendship,

even into love, because, as it springs from some definite causes, other definite causes may obliterate it, but a mysterious repulsion, that antipathy which is born in the depths of our psychical being, that does not die nor become extirpated or transformed. No reasoning can conquer unreason, nor is there any logic which will avail against instinct, which acts on us like nature, directly and intuitively, by virtue of laws whose essence is, and forever will be for us, an impenetrable secret.

Grant that Carmen did not hate my uncle Felipe. She was incapable of feeling hatred toward anybody. My uncle had given her his name, a good position, such as it was ; he did not treat her ill, nor did I even notice that he scrimped her in money-matters, although I clearly saw that if the wife were free to do as she desired she would enlarge her list of charities.

The married life of my uncle and aunt, thus, was only like that of so many husbands and wives we see nowadays ; in appearance tranquil and even happy, upheld by that decorous and middle-class spirit of concord, so fash-

ionable in our modern society, where customs as well as streets are drawn in a straight line, more precise and symmetrical every day. But as within the houses in those straight streets tragic events occur, and love, vice, and crime come and go just as they did in the crookedest alleys known to the Middle Ages, so under that couple's cloak of harmony and mutual esteem I could perceive their incompatibility of temper; the husband's inclination to be mean and tyrannical, and the wife's cold, hard, and unconscious feeling of repulsion.

Sometimes I would say to myself: "Take care, for Luis is right and I am a fool! I ought not to pay the slightest attention to Carmen's dislike to her husband, which I constantly observe. What should preoccupy me is the sentiment which I inspire in her. If she loved me as I love her, what would I care if she acted like some dramatic heroine we read of, and, without ceasing to love me madly, should still display toward her husband a most tender affection,—filial, or sisterly, or conjugal respect? Only let her return my love,

and the rest, as far as I am concerned, shall be allowed to take place on the stage of the soul—where no one ought to venture. What inference can I draw from the fact that even if she does not care for her rightful lord, she never even looks at me?”

Well, I would not draw any inference, yet I kept on watching the signs of that antipathy with intense joy. Just as, when we begin to surmise that the woman we love will return our affection, we eagerly watch for a glance, a smile, a furtive blush, the trace of a passing emotion, that, tearing asunder the delicate veil which infolds a woman's heart, betrays and lays bare the hidden flame, so I used to study the inflections of her voice, the ill-concealed flashing of her eyes, the scarcely perceptible tremor of her lips which revealed to me the wife's moral state.

At the dinner hour I would watch her closely, though pretending to be absent-minded, playing with my fork or discussing politics with my uncle. I am sure that everything can be feigned, everything subjected to the will,—even the expression of the countenance,—

but not the voice. Carmen was able to control the muscles of her face, to subdue her eyes, to prevent her delicate nostrils from dilating, but never could succeed in making her voice, usually even, soft and clear when she was addressing others, anything but harsh and muffled when she spoke to her husband. And, aside from that fact, there were a thousand plain indications. The plainest was her anxiety to prolong the evenings in the parlor. Of her own motion, that woman would never have gone to bed. What a delightful impression it made on me the few times that I succeeded in spending the evening with her, to see her retard the hour of retiring with a thousand pretexts; burying herself in her work, saying that she had a certain stint to finish, that she would not go to bed until she finished it; that she had to write to her father, or to some friends in Pontevedra; until, finally, my uncle would unceremoniously command her to retire. I was only able to make such observations on Saturday nights; the rest of the week I had to go to my room early on account of my lessons. I used to sit by the chimney in

the boudoir next to her bedroom, which had moss-green plush portières. They were drawn back, so that I could look into the hateful chamber, where was daily enacted the iniquitous mystery of absolute intimacy between two beings who did not love each other or perhaps feel any esteem for each other, who had no mutual understanding or any points of contact beyond the fact that the Moorish friar had thrown the stole over them at the same time.

One morning I received a letter from my mother, written in her usual precipitate and incoherent style, without punctuation, it is unnecessary to add, and wholly devoted to giving me some strange news.

“You don’t know the greatest joke of all that the old man Aldao fell into the trap set by that horrid girl Candidiña who turned his head bewitched and made him raving mad until finally he consented to marry her secretly not publicly and the priest denies it and the old man as well but I know it by one who saw it with his own eyes and some very indecent couplets are going the rounds in Pontevedra about this phenomenon and it seems that the

editor of *El Teucrense* wrote them and they would make one die laughing an impudent girl can succeed in anything they say he gave her a mantilla and a black silk dress may the Lord grant that we may not lose our wits and get in our dotage I don't know whether his daughter knows it but keep quiet and let somebody else tell her for they will surely write to Felipe about this scrape a nice mess it is and now he has a step-mother and I am glad of it as he took advantage of us."

It is needless to say that as soon as I could find Carmen alone I hastened to tell her the great news, not without great preambles and much circumlocution. Far from being startled or sorrowful, Señor Aldao's daughter displayed great satisfaction.

"God has heard my prayers," she exclaimed, impetuously. "God has rewarded me, Salustio. At my father's age he had better be married than—otherwise. I am glad for his own sake. You may be sure that I rejoice, though I should have liked him to make a different choice. But now that it is over, I hope it may turn out well."

"I don't want to spoil your joy," I said; "but Carmiña, a man of your father's age runs a great risk and loses something of his dignity by marrying a girl of sixteen."

"That matter rests between her and her conscience," argued my aunt. "Probably she will be very careful in the discharge of her new duties, now that she is married. She never had any before; some improprieties can be pardoned her."

"But she is a regular weather-vane and will continue to be so, for it is innate in her. A nice one she is, to lead on that poor old gentleman to such an extreme! I assure you, your step-mother is a rare bird. No one knows what the future will bring forth."

"Well, God is over all. Let us hope that the grace of the sacrament may do its office."

"Do you believe in the grace of the sacrament?" I asked, remembering what Luis had said, and smiling, in spite of myself, at her words, which were in such marked contrast to my own ideas and convictions, though, coming from her lips, they seemed to me the very formula of propriety and moral beauty.

“What a question! Why shouldn’t I believe in it? Fine I’d look if I didn’t! When God instituted that sacrament he pledged Himself to help with His grace all who avail themselves of it. Without such aid marriage would not be possible.”

“Grace consists in loving each other, Carmen,” I murmured, drawing near to her and fixing my eyes on hers. I did not desire to convince her, or to lead her astray, God knows, but, on the contrary, I wanted her to display all the absurdities of her theological learning and brandish before me, like a warlike Amazon, the well-tempered weapons with which she guarded her virtue. But I reckoned without my host, because Carmen would not engage in controversy. She only replied, pleasantly:

“It is only natural that you should think that way, being only a boy, and having such ideas as you do. I am very sorry that you are not more religious. With years you will gain experience and will be able to judge better. Your head will get settled at last!”

“Well, Carmiña, suppose I only need a word from you to settle it? Do you say that that

about loving each other is all nonsense? Well, I'll believe it if you say so. But at least you cannot deny that in order to be happy, no matter how holy the married pair may be, they must have some affection for each other; must at least not hate each other or be mutually repugnant. Am I not right?"

Carmina turned pale, and her eyelashes quivered slightly. She suddenly looked at me with a pained expression as though saying: "That is a forbidden subject and I am surprised that you should allude to it."

I carried away from that brief dialogue, broken off by the coming in of my uncle, a greater supply of hope. My uncle entered hastily, with a very abrupt and surprised air. As soon as he saw his wife he drew a letter from his pocket.

"Carmen, what is the meaning of this? Did you know anything about it? Why, Castro Mera writes to me saying that everybody declares that your father is secretly married to his maid-servant's niece!"

My aunt tried to control her voice as she answered bravely:

"It must be true, for Benigna also has written about it to Salustio."

"And you say so in that quiet way?" cried her husband.

There are moments in which the curtain is drawn back, and you surprise the soul in all its nakedness and perceive its mysterious shapes, however quickly the surprised one may try to cover them up. That cry fully revealed my uncle's soul, hard, dry, and vilely mercenary—like a great many others which roam around the world inclosed in bodies less Jewish in appearance.

"It is a great joke—your taking it so coolly," he continued, excited and beside himself. "According to that you don't care if your father is crazy! Because that is what it is—senile imbecility, dotage! But your brother and I will take steps to annul the marriage, and have that old man put under a guardian. Getting married! What a farce! That is what is called laughing in the face of all the world and making fools of stupid sons-in-law!"

His eyes flashed fire, his hooked nose gave emphasis to the expression of avarice and

rapacity on his coarse lips, his face was flushed and almost as red as his beard, while his trembling hand mechanically took up and laid down again on the table already set for lunch, knife, fork, and napkin.

“What do you expect,” replied his wife, firmly, taking her place at the table as though nothing had occurred. “My father is master of his own actions for the very reason that he is so old. It is not true that he is in his dotage, and the respect we owe him ought to prohibit us from opposing his will. Let us be patient. It would be worse if he were to live in a scandalous manner.”

“You are a fool!” exclaimed her husband, losing all restraint for the first time, and determined to free his mind. “At your father’s age there is no scandal possible, or any such nonsense; all that there is, is folly and imbecility and ridiculousness—that most absurd of all things, marrying a young girl of low birth, a servant! Within a month’s time he will find that his head is too big for his hat. You women don’t know about such matters, or know what you are talking about. It is

your lack of experience and ignorance of the world, which you do not know, nor have you any reason to know it. So you would do better to keep quiet most of the time. And, by Jove! if you will hear it, your father ought to have told me, before marrying off his daughter: 'Felipe, don't be too sure of me; although I am so old that my pantaloons fall off me, I feel lively and wont be long in getting married again. And as at my age a man always has children I shall have two or three boys who will leave my daughter out in the cold.' How nice, hey? How nice!"

My aunt kept quiet. The pallor of her cheeks, her quick breathing and her flashing eyes indicated the indignation and protest which raged in her soul. But instead of opening the valve, she repressed her feelings and took a glass of water which was on the table. I heard the glass click against her teeth while she drank, showing how rapidly her pulse was beating. My uncle, without paying the slightest regard to her agitation and her brave silence, went on, growing more and more excited with his own words:

"I shall write him a scorching letter at once and tell him what I think. He shall hear from me, I swear it. That deviltry will be thrown in his face, or my name is not Felipe. I'll give him so much trouble that he'll have cause to remember the saint of my name. And he, of course, will think that I shall allow you to associate with your precious step-mother!"

"In the first place," replied my aunt slowly, with an effort, "I believe that their marriage is still a secret; and in the second place, I used to associate with her when I was at home and when she was exposed to worse things. Why shouldn't I associate with her now that she is my father's wife, if she behaves herself properly?"

"Behaves herself; no trouble about behavior!" exclaimed my uncle, ironically. "Behaves herself well! The young fellows at Pontevendra and San Andrés can tell you all about that. However, as far as that is concerned I don't care anything about it—"

"Well, as for me, that's the only thing I do care about," answered my aunt, vehemently,

unable to restrain herself any longer. "I hope that my father may not have cause to feel ashamed of his choice, and let the rest be as God wills,—as it will be, after all."

Oh, obdurate hardness of heart of the Hebrew race, with how much justice did Christ reprove you! Those words, prompted by a sublime impulse of faith, would have moved a stone; but my uncle was harder than a stone, and, throwing away his napkin, he arose from the table, muttering between his teeth:

"As if that was not enough to come upon one, I must listen to stupidities and twaddle. He must have nerve. Just think of that scarecrow getting married now; and then to hear him defended here,—here in my own house!"

He rushed out of the dining-room. I followed him, for I wanted to know where he was going, and I had an object in leaving Carmen alone. I heard my uncle shut himself up in his study, doubtless in order to write the "scorching" letter to his father-in-law. Then I went back, and entering the dining-room, suddenly, drew near to Carmen and seated myself beside her, murmuring tenderly:

“Don’t cry, my aunt; come, now, don’t cry. Foolish one, don’t trouble yourself about that.”

I had not deceived myself in my surmises.

Startled, she turned around, and I saw her eyes swimming in tears, though her energy of will instantly dried them. In a voice which was almost steady she answered me, drawing away a little :

“Thanks, Salustio. It is all over. One can’t help it sometimes, one is so foolish.”

“That man talks to you in a way which arouses my indignation. I had a hard time to keep still. How can you bear it?”

“No, no, not that; don’t even say it! He is my husband, and can’t stop to choose his words.”

“Indeed, he ought to choose them. To a woman like you, who are goodness and holiness in person, one ought to speak in this posture—so—do you see?” I murmured, kneeling before her.

“If you don’t get up I shall be angry, and so I shall if you ever say that again,” answered she, standing up resolutely. “I don’t thank

you for this attempt to comfort me, Salustio; it seems more like flattery, and flattering me is lost time. Do you want me to tell you the truth? Well, then, I am to blame, entirely to blame, for that unpleasant scene. I ought not to have gone contrary to Felipe, but to have waited till the first outburst was over, and then have reasoned with him. It is only natural that he should feel annoyed at papa's marriage. Let us be fair. No husband ever gets angry with his wife if she does not contradict him. The tongue causes all matrimonial dissensions. It is a wife's duty to keep quiet."

"No, you foolish girl, your duty is to speak when you are right; the same as we do, although we often talk a great deal when we are wrong. So you think that even if your husband were to break forth with some barbarous remark,—such as to say there is no God,—you ought not to answer him?"

"Not while he is irritated—no, what good would it do! It would be like throwing wood into the fire, and would never persuade him. But as soon as he gets calm, then I ought to tell him my objections, affectionately and

mildly, as well as I know how, and then he would listen to me and would be persuaded."

I did not know what to reply, since, even though a thousand reflections occurred to me, my aunt's way of reasoning conquered me completely, and seemed the only one worthy of her.

It was a very cloudy day. The dining-room opened into the court, and the thick curtains cut off the light and made it more gloomy. The folds of those dark, thick woolen curtains seemed to me, by a sudden freak of the imagination, to look like a friar's garb, the heavy cord that looped them up helping to make the resemblance all the more striking. The arabesque patterns on the curtain, at a certain height, looked to me like a man's face. It was a strange bit of self-suggestion that evoked there the shadow of Father Moreno, listening to our conversation, and ridiculing me with a mocking air. "Cursed friar!" I ejaculated mentally, addressing the curtain. "You are going to be disappointed, I promise you. Because nothing that outrages human nature and is con-

trary to its laws will last, and this heroic abnegation of my aunt and the violence she does to her own deepest feelings cannot go on indefinitely; the time will come when the spring will break, and I shall watch for that hour to come. I swear to you, you stupid friar, you have never tasted the only real happiness in life."

By chance my aunt fixed her eyes on the curtain with the intensity of those who gaze into vacancy and are distracted by their sad reflections. I fancied that she also saw what I did in the folds of the curtains, and that to her eyes also the shadow of the friar stood forth, silent but eloquent in its attitude.

What would I not have given then to penetrate into the hidden recesses of that woman's mind, and read the revolutionary proclamation which was undoubtedly written there by an invisible hand! But the wife allowed nothing to come to the surface. She arose and went into the kitchen to ask whether lunch was ready. "For you must be hungry by this time, Salustio," she said when she came back, calm and self-possessed.

CHAPTER XXII.

How did it happen that a ray of divine joy, of unreasoning but delicious hope, fell upon my soul—a light, in short, like that which according to popular tradition, penetrates the darkness of the limbo on Candlemas Day? Let me see whether I can recollect it, with all its most insignificant and even ludicrous details; with its intermingling of dreams and realities, so inseparable that I do not know where the first end or the second begin; indeed, I cannot affirm that the latter ever existed except within the soul that perceived them, in my own representative faculty, though that is for me the supreme reality.

It happened that Trinito, our philharmonic Cuban, on receiving quite a large sum of money from his island home, set about spending it right and left in the most reckless manner. One of his extravagances was to take orchestra chairs at the Real and invite us all to

go to the opening night of a Spanish opera, which had been greatly discussed and commented upon in the newspapers beforehand. In vain did we object that this lavishness was unnecessary, since we would feel much more at our ease in the gallery, between girls both plain and good-looking, and skilled devotees of the "divine art."

But what he really aspired to was to put on airs and give a certain dress-coat its opening night, and he would not listen to us, but dragged Portal and me off to the theater; but as for the poor boy from Zamora, he would not budge, even if they were to cut him in pieces.

Neither Portal nor I owned dress-coats, but we did justice to the festive occasion and put on our long frock-coats, which we dragged out from the bottom of our trunks, hoping that no one would notice us, and that all eyes would be fixed on the Cuban, who was resplendent in his finery. His new dress-coat and trousers glistened with the peculiar luster of broad-cloth, and the narrow satin lappel, reaching down to his waist, set off the snowy whiteness

of his shirt-front. The fellow, in order not to omit any accessory, had spent his quarter for a fragrant gardenia, which rested proudly in his button-hole in irreproachable style. He did not buy a crush hat for lack of time, but entered the theater concealing his slouch hat under his cloak, so as not to disarrange his curls and the beautiful parting of his hair.

We took our seats, feeling somewhat bashful, hoping that nobody would see us; but Trinito stood up with his back to the orchestra, and, thrusting out his chest where the fine shirt-front bulged out, passed his gloveless hand over his carefully dressed hair, and looked just like a dandy of the loftiest and most overpowering sort. Although his sight was as keen as his hearing, he had hired an enormous pair of opera-glasses, and leveled them alternately at the boxes and orchestra seats, scanning the society belles, their low-cut dresses, their ornaments and jewels. Portal, very quiet and somewhat abashed, amused himself by saying *sotto voce* that Queen Christina was gazing at him through her lorgnette, and that the Infanta Isabel was making signs

to the Infanta Eulalia to call her attention to the unknown and fascinating dandy.

As soon as the curtain went up, Trinito experienced his musical seizure, and closely followed the construction of the opera, which for five hours gave us siftings of Wagner and Meyerbeer, Donizetti and Rossini, as it had a little of everything in it except what was new and Spanish.

Trinito, carried away by excitement, and with his unfailing, retentive memory, would not let us rest.

"Boys," he said, "this is simply an *olla podrida*. Here the fellow has put in the *largo assai* of Mendelssohn's thirty-second *opus*. Well, well! If he hasn't taken the entire *allegretto* of the overture of 'Don Juan.' I declare, that's from 'The Magic Flute;' fifteen measures, at least, are exactly like it, stolen bodily! This *maestoso* is from 'The Flying Dutchman' or 'Parsifal.'"

"Or from 'Green Beans,'" added Portal, phlegmatically.

"Don't you laugh, for there is something from 'Green Beans,' also, or very much like it,

because I have heard that sort of a clatter in comic opera. Now he skips to the Symphony in A minor of the *sordo sublime*—fellows, I am infuriated! I shall protest! This is simply highway robbery!”

In the second act Trinito's indignation went on in a *crescendo* no less noisy than that of the closing duet. In the third, he completely bored us with his exposures of reminiscences and plagiarisms, shouting so loudly as to attract the attention of the audience, pointing out the fragments of a hand of Mozart's or a shin of Beethoven's, which were scattered through the opera; and at the fourth act, his rage grew so overwhelming that he would not allow us to stay till the end of the opera.

“Let us go before they call out that counterfeiter! I would hiss him if I remained, and one must not raise a rumpus here. Come on, then; let us be discreet. I am so enraged I scarcely know what I am doing. Hold me, carry me to the street!”

We were amazed at this outburst, as surprising in the usually calm and equable Cuban as it would have been in a canary or a lamb,

and consented to leave before anybody else, making off through the lobby toward the door.

Without transition, we passed from the heated, vibrating, and echoing air of the orchestra circle, out to the chilly lobby, which was all the colder for being deserted, since only two ushers were walking up and down there. A current of air, sharp as a stiletto, entered my half-opened mouth, while I was laughing, and my dilated nostrils, and went as by instinct to my chest, where I felt a singular compression.

"Cover your mouths, gentlemen," said the practical Luis, "or we shall catch the greatest pneumonia of the Christian era. Cover your mouth, Salustio ; don't be childish."

I searched for my handkerchief in order to protect myself with it, but I already felt that strange warning, that dull, numb pain of the disease which so insidiously enters our bodies, taking advantage of our imprudence or carelessness, as a thief who sees the key in the door and improves the opportunity to investigate the chest.

"I believe that I have already caught it," I murmured, with some anxiety.

“Don’t worry ; let us go to Fornos’s and take some punch. Come on, you’ll see how nice and hot it will be,” said my companions, as we emerged into the bleak Plaza de Oriente. We proceeded to Fornos’s and took our punch. Trinito treated us, and gave us a fresh monograph on the plagiarisms and rhapsodies in the opera ; while he sang his indignation for us, and even played it for us on the table. That time he was determined to write a musical criticism ; of course he would ! He was going to pulverize the composer, or the rat, to be more explicit, which he had caught in the act of visiting Wagner’s pocket.

I went to bed late and did not sleep well. The next day I awoke feeling inexplicably tired and depressed, with that species of despondency or dejection which precedes any great physical disorder. Carmen noticed that I did not look well and begged me to lie down, scolding me gently for having gone to bed the night before at such an unearthly hour.

I consented because I felt so worn out, and every bone in my body ached, as we say in the

country. As I withdrew I said to Carmiña, in a supplicating tone :

“ Will you come to see me ? ”

“ Of course I will. I shall take you a cup of tea made of boiled mallow-flowers to give you a sweat. You have taken cold ; probably through some crazy imprudence.”

As soon as I lay down, in a flash, the fever broke out triumphantly, as did my exhaustion and the congestion of my lungs. I began to wander in my mind and grow delirious. It could not have been delirium so much as a capricious and fanciful flight of the imagination through those regions of which I was most fond when in my normal state.

In my lucid intervals, and between the paroxysms of my struggle for breath, I seemed to see the yew tree once more, with its dark green foliage, standing out against the heavenly blue sky and the pale verdure of the riverlands. I heard the songs of working-women, pipes announcing the dawn, the whizz of rockets, the sound of a piano, and there were moments when I was positive that an ugly black bat came fluttering through the win-

dow, and, with a pin run through it, expired before me. Of course, Father Moreno was there, and sometimes his presence consoled me, while at other times it would so irritate me, that I would have gladly flung something at his head.

During my delirium it seems that I sang loudly and gave formulas and propounded problems, in mathematics. What I am sure of is that, over and above my delirium and the fever and terrible discomfort, and the strictures in my bronchial tubes and lungs, an enchanting sensation used to hover. Carmen did not leave my room; she gave me my medicines, smoothed my sheets, and waited on me and attended to me all through. At one time, when, by an involuntary impulse produced by the fever, I threw my arms around her neck, I fancied—was I really out of my head?—that Carmen, so strong, so invincible, far from making the slightest movement to draw away from me, was returning my embrace. I would swear that her eyes gazed at me with a sweet and tender look; that her hands caressed and petted me as one pets and

caresses a child ; that her lips murmured sweet words which sounded like music of the heart. Allowing myself to be carried away by my fancy, I thought, as I sank to sleep under the influence of a powerful narcotic : -

“ Carmen loves me ; she loves me, without doubt. How happy I shall be if I do not die ! ”

I sighed, half turned over in bed, and, if I could have put into words the feeling which filled my heart, I would have added, “ And how happy I shall be, even if I do die. ”

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Middletown, Conn.
New Haven, Conn.
Norwich, Conn.
Waterbury, Conn.
Washington, D. C.
Quincy, Ill.
Marcus, Iowa.
New Orleans, La.
Baltimore, Md.
Boston, Mass.

Fall River, Mass.
Springfield, Mass.
Worcester, Mass.
Calumet, Mich.
Austin, Minn.
Minneapolis, Minn.
St. Paul, Minn.
Asbury Park, N. J.
Paterson, N. J.
Trenton, N. J.
Albany, N. Y.
Antwerp, N. Y.
Auburn, N. Y.

Binghamton, N. Y.
Canajoharie, N. Y.
Gloversville, N. Y.
Ithaca, N. Y.
Liberty, N. Y.
LaFargeville, N. Y.
Middletown, N. Y.
Ogdensburg, N. Y.
Oneida, N. Y.
Port Jervis, N. Y.
Poughkeepsie, N. Y.
Sing Sing, N. Y.
Syracuse, N. Y.

Walton, N. Y.
Watertown, N. Y.
New Berne, N. C.
Cleveland, O.
Columbus, O.
Zanesville, O.
Brookville, Pa.
Harrisburg, Pa.
Milton, Pa.
Philadelphia, Pa.
Pittsburg, Pa.
Scranton, Pa.
Sharon, Pa.

Reading, Pa.
Johnstown, Pa.
Wilkes Barre, Pa.
Columbia, S. C.
Fort Worth, Tex.
Houston, Tex.
San Antonio, Tex.
Waco, Tex.
Brattleboro, Vt.
Vergennes, Vt.
Richmond, Va.
Roanoke, Va.
Milwaukee, Wis.

And many other places not mentioned above





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